MIM THEORY
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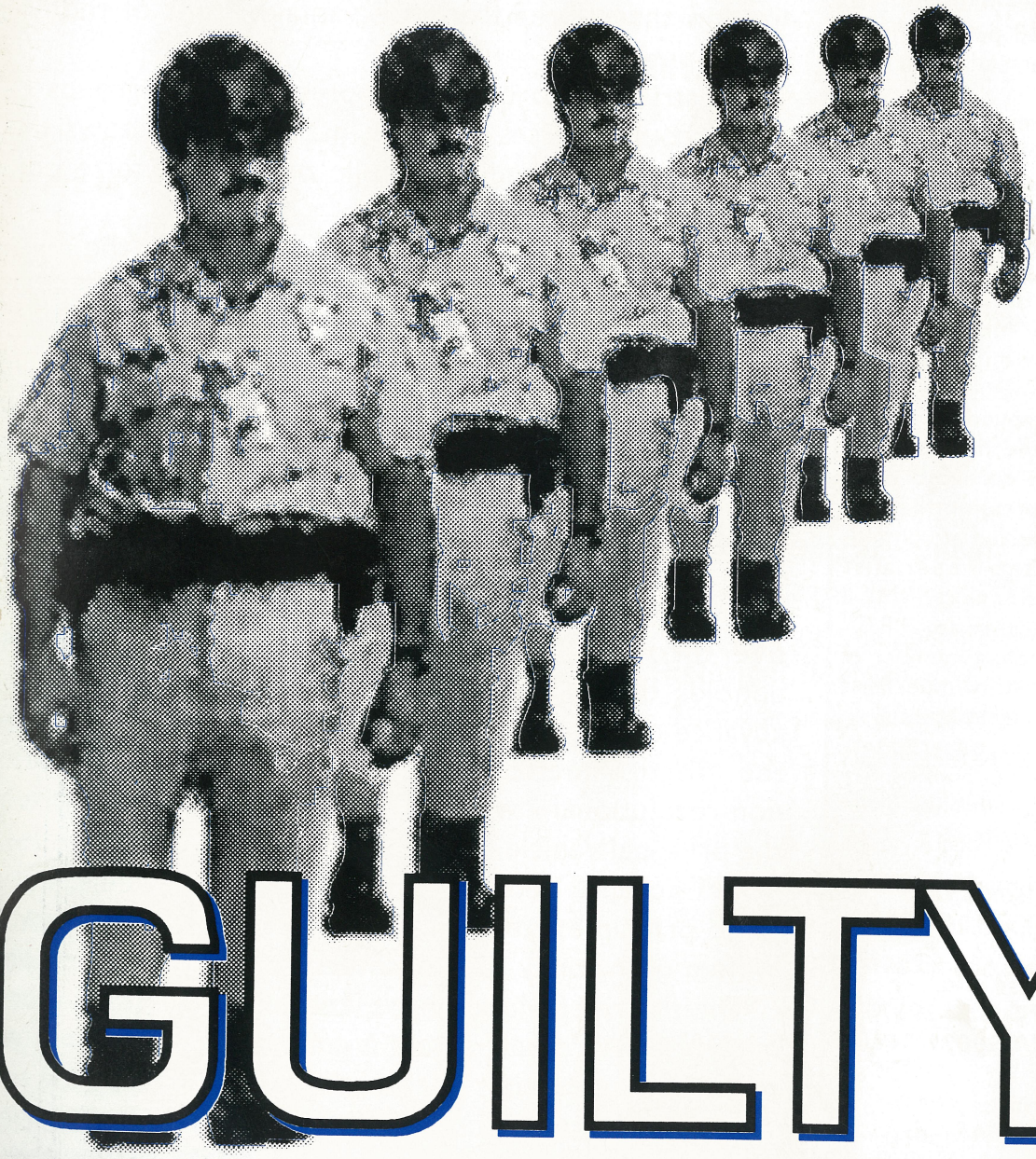
OF THE MAOIST INTERNATIONALIST MOVEMENT

Amerikkkan Prisons ON TRIAL



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MIM Theory

1996
Volume 4, Number 2

Maoist Internationalist Movement

Editor: MC12

MIM Theory is the official theoretical journal of the Maoist Internationalist Movement (MIM). Subscriptions are $18 per year/four issues. Overseas airmail subscriptions are $36.

MIM also publishes MIM Notes, the party's official voice on current news ($12/12 issues or $1 each); Notas Rojas, the newspaper of emerging Spanish-speaking parties of MIM ($4/year); and, Maoist Sojourner, by and for Third World Maoist exiles led by MIM ($12/year 12 issues). International subscriptions cost more.

MIM is an underground party that does not publish the names of its comrades in order to avoid state surveillance and repression that has been historically directed at communist parties and anti-imperialist movements. In the text, "MC" means a MIM Comrade, "RC" means RAIL Comrade, a member of the Revolutionary Anti-Imperialist League, which is led by MIM.

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What is MIM?

The Maoist Internationalist Movement is the collection of existing or emerging Maoist internationalist parties in the English-speaking imperialist countries and their English-speaking internal semi-colonies, as well as the existing or emerging Spanish-speaking Maoist internationalist parties of Aztlan, Puerto Rico and other territories of the U.S. Empire.

MIM upholds the revolutionary communist ideology of Marxism-Leninism-Maoism and is an internationalist organization that works from the vantage point of the Third World proletariat.

MIM struggles to end the oppression of all groups over other groups: classes, genders, nations. MIM knows this is only possible by building public opinion to seize power through armed struggle.

Revolution is a reality for North America as the military becomes over-extended in the government's attempts to maintain world hegemony.

MIM differs from other communist parties on three main questions: (1) MIM holds that after the proletariat seizes power in socialist revolution, the potential exists for capitalist restoration under the leadership of a new bourgeoisie within the communist party itself. In the case of the USSR, the bourgeoisie seized power after the death of Stalin in 1953; in China, it was after Mao's death and the overthrow of the "Gang of Four" in 1976. (2) MIM upholds the Chinese Cultural Revolution as the farthest advance of communism in human history. (3) MIM believes the North American white-working-class is primarily a non-revolutionary worker-elite at this time; thus, it is not the principal vehicle to advance Maoism in this country.

MIM accepts people as members who agree on these basic principles and accept democratic centralism, the system of majority rule, on other questions of party line.

"The theory of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin is universally applicable. We should regard it not as dogma, but as a guide to action. Studying it is not merely a matter of learning terms and phrases, but of learning Marxism-Leninism as the science of revolution." — Mao Zedong, Selected Works, Vol. II, p. 208

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Number 11 • 1996

Amerikkkan Prisons On Trial

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Note on numbering: The current series of MIM Theory began with Vol. 1 No. 1 (MT 1) in 1992. Vol 1 included MT 1-4. Vol. 2 included MT 5-6. Vol. 3 included MT 7-9. Volume 4 began with MT 10 (which was mis-numbered on the inside cover). The number within each volume does not correspond with the series number that appears on the cover and on the Contents page.

WHAT WE WANT, WHAT WE BELIEVE

Maoist Internationalist Movement Program, October 1995

1. We want communism.

We believe that anyone who opposes all oppression—power of groups over groups—is a communist. This includes opposition to national oppression, class oppression and gender oppression.

2. We want socialism.

We believe that socialism is the path to communism. We believe that the current dictatorship of the bourgeoisie oppresses the world's majority. We believe that socialism—the dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry—is a necessary step towards a world without inequality or dictatorship—a communist world. We uphold the USSR under Lenin and Stalin (1917-1953) and China under Mao (1949-1976) as models in this regard.

3. We want revolutionary armed struggle.

We believe that the oppressors will not give up their power without a fight. Ending oppression is only possible by building public opinion to seize power through armed struggle. We believe, however, that armed struggle in the imperialist countries is a serious strategic mistake until the bourgeoisie becomes really helpless. Revolution will become a reality for North America as the U.S. military becomes over-extended in the government's attempts to maintain world hegemony.

"We are advocates of the abolition of war, we do not want war; but war can only be abolished through war, and in order to get rid of the gun it is necessary to take up the gun."—Mao Zedong

4. We want organization.

We believe that democratic-centralism, the system of unified application of majority decisions, is necessary to defeat the oppressors. This system includes organization, leadership, discipline and hierarchy. The oppressors use these weapons, and we should, too. By building a disciplined revolutionary communist vanguard party, we follow in the tradition of comrades Lenin, Mao and Huey Newton.

5. We want independent institutions of and for the oppressed.

We believe that the oppressed need independent media to build public opinion for socialist revolution. We believe that the oppressed need independent institutions to provide land, bread, housing, education, medical care, clothing, justice and peace. We believe that the best independent institution of all is a self-reliant socialist government.

6. We want continuous revolution.

We believe that class struggle continues under socialism. We believe that under socialism, the danger exists for a new bourgeoisie to arise within the communist party itself. We believe that these new oppressors will restore capitalism unless they are stopped. We believe that the bourgeoisie seized power in the USSR after the death of Stalin in 1953; in China it was after Mao's death and the overthrow of the "Gang of Four" in 1976. We believe that China's Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution (1966-1976) is the farthest advance towards communism in human history, because it mobilized millions of people against the restoration of capitalism.

7. We want a united front against imperialism.

We believe that the imperialists are currently waging a hot war—a World War III—against the world's oppressed nations, including the U.S. empire's internal colonies. We seek to unite all who can be united under proletarian and feminist leadership against imperialism, capitalism and patriarchy.

We believe that the imperialist-country working classes are primarily a pro-imperialist labor aristocracy at this time. Likewise, we believe that the biological-wimmin of the imperialist countries are primarily a gender aristocracy. Thus, while we recruit individuals from these and other reactionary groups to work against their class, national and gender interests, we do not seek strategic unity with them. In fact, we believe that the imperialist-country working-classes and imperialist-country biological-wimmin, like the bourgeoisies and petit-bourgeoisies, owe reparations to the international proletariat and peasantry. As such, one of the first strategic steps MIM will take upon winning state power will be to open the borders.

We believe that socialism in the imperialist countries will require the dictatorship of the *international* proletariat and that the imperialist-country working-classes will need to be on the receiving end of this dictatorship.

8. We want New Democracy for the oppressed nations. We want power for the oppressed nations to determine their destinies.

We believe that oppressed people will not be free until they are able to determine their destinies. We look forward to the day when oppressed people will live without imperialist police terror and will learn to speak their mind without fear of the consequences from the oppressor. When this day comes, meaningful plebiscites can be held in which the peoples will decide for themselves if they want their own separate nation-states or some other arrangement.

9. We want world revolution.

We believe it is our duty to support Marxism-Leninism-Maoism everywhere, though our principal task is to build public opinion and independent institutions in preparation for Maoist revolution in North America. The imperialists think and act globally—we must do the same.

10. We want politics in command.

We believe that correct tactics flow from correct strategies, which flow from a correct ideological and political line. We believe that the fight against imperialism, capitalism and patriarchy goes hand-in-hand with the fight against revisionism, chauvinism, and opportunism.

"The correctness or otherwise of the ideological and political line decides everything. When the Party's line is correct, then everything will come its way. If it has no followers, then it can have followers; if it has no guns, then it can have guns; if it has no political power, then it can have political power."—Mao Zedong

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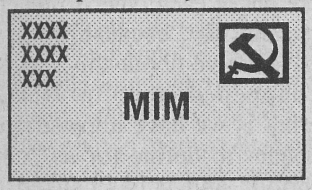
Letters to MIM Theory

Reality & Unholy Alliances

The New York prisoner has been polemicizing with a post-modern Puerto Rican student for over a year. The student has not yet said what he is for, *but only that he is against MIM's "hypocrisy" on the United Front and the idea of stages in revolution. This is a portion of a recent (March 11, 1996) letter to the student. -ed.*

You're right, "ideology" — as you call it — is not a body nor a personality and we do not subscribe to the personality cult; we defend Stalin and Mao due to their politics and their firm practice and stance on the side of the oppressed and exploited. We also take responsibility for errors that are made in the process of the revolution along with criticizing them and correcting them.



Dialectical materialism is the *only* true way of perceiving the concrete reality, i.e. matter in motion. Dialectical materialism is not just a tool to understand reality but also of changing it. Our theories and practice are firmly planted on the ground while yours are high in the sky. You prove this by saying that the "idea should transcend the body." You also state that "the ideology which I embrace, is one invoking social, economic, political, and juridical justice." It would be interesting to put me on to what specific ideology you embrace. The oppressors also claim to embrace an ideology that invokes social, economic, political, and juridical justice. Does your ideology derive from a metaphysical plane that you received by divine inspiration during your stay upon Mt. Sinai, or maybe Mt. Olympus?

You want to know what happens to the national bourgeoisie after the seizure of state power. Well for one the revolution does not end after we seize state power: Class still exists, therefore class struggle still remains. Classes do not disappear once the means of production are nationalized and socialized. The aims of the democratic revolution (the first step in Maoist revolution) is to unite all those who can be united against the common enemy, persuade the national bourgeoisie to join the proletarian line and to put their service and know-how towards the scientific socialists path. Some will fall on our side, some will not. Those who do not are obviously class enemies and will be treated as such. Revolutionary history has taught us that they will be the aggressors, therefore the population must be mobilized against them.

As you fail to see, the principal contradiction right now is between imperialism and the oppressed nations. The petit-bourgeoisie and other sectors of the national bourgeoisie have an interest in anti-imperialist struggle and the defeat of imperialism. Why not ally with them against the common enemy? What would you have done during the prison rebellion in Lucasville when the fascists and Muslims allied against prison injustice for common demands? Would you have been for that or against it?

Unholy alliances are permissible as long as they serve the revolutionary goal, class struggle is never forgotten, we're aware of the nature of our allies, and maintain our independent proletariat stance and a clear understanding of our friends and enemies. Lenin has taught us that "Only those who are not sure of themselves can fear to enter into temporary alliances even with unreliable people; not a single political party could exist without such alliances."(1) But being that your clothes are too clean to get into the thick of revolutionary struggle and your ideology is so sacred that it exists on some transcendental heavenly plane, I understand why the crude earthly reality of revolution is just too rude for you.

The internal class struggle between the oppressed nationalities and oppressor nation(s) give rise to the national contradiction which manifests itself as national oppression and national liberation struggle. When we say objectively we are speaking of analyzing the material world with no artificial flavas added, dig? Instead of neutrality we see vacillation. Inaction is also an action! Justice is the proletarian over the bourgeoisie. Our long-term goal is the elimination of oppression and exploitation of one group of people over another. We don't bear mind to a dogmatic justice. Proletarian justice must serve the revolutionary struggle. Hopefully this will give you an insight to your questions. I strongly suggest that you order MIM Theory 7, "Proletarian Feminist Revolutionary Nationalism on the Communist Road," which will give you a much more profound understanding on the questions you pose [$6 from MIM *-ed*].

I would appreciate it if you answer the following questions:

1. Do you agree that U.S. imperialism must be destroyed?

2. Do you agree that national liberation and self-determination is a must for the oppressed nationalities?

3. Do you know of a much more effective tool than Marxism-Leninism-Maoism? If so what is it? And where has it worked?

The Maoists will win!

— The New York Prisoner

Notes: 1. V. I. Lenin, *What Is to Be Done?* Progress Publishers: Moscow, 1947, p. 18.

Prisons are Not Kamps

To whom it may concern,

I saw your flyer at Kalamazoo College. I would like to know what you mean by Koncentration Kamps. In my mind, that is totally inappropriate. I have been in Poland and I have been to Auschwitz, Birkenau, Treblinka and Majdanek. No institution here can compare to the horrors I saw there. I would appreciate a response justifying this name. To me, that is a mockery of the Holocaust, which was a huge part of Jewish history and cannot be compared to any jail or halfway house in the world.

Thank you,

—A Kalamazoo student

MIM responds: Thanks for writing. When we refer to Amerikan prisons as koncentration kamps we are calling attention to the fact that they are institutions that seek out and systematically brutalize members of oppressed nations within U.S. borders. MIM publishes evidence of the systematic nature of oppression in the prisons every month in the Under Lock & Key section of MIM Notes — two pages of news written by prisoners and about prisons. Send us a dollar for a copy of MIM Notes to read in more detail about the lives of prisoners in Amerika.

If you are interested in finding out more about conditions inside American prisons, we invite you to come to one or more of the events we are hosting with the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) as part of a Prisons Awareness week [this has already passed -ed].

Amerikan prisons are filled disproportionately with members of the Black, Latino and Indigenous nations and disproportionately staffed by white guards. Various forms of torture are standard and legal within these koncentration kamps: isolation, sensory deprivation, sleep deprivation and withholding of communication with people outside. Beatings and other forms of brutality, while not officially protected by law, are common.

MIM has done work to expose Nazi history, particularly in MIM Theory 6, "The Stalin Issue," which discusses the tremendous threat Nazism posed to Europe and the world (as this threat is typically underestimated in a country whose government chose not to oppose fascism militarily until 1941). As Maoists, we are fierce opponents of fascism and its brutality against oppressed peoples. But just because we oppose what the fascists did to European Jews in the 1930s and 40s does not mean that we see this as an unparalleled historical event. It is important to expose the connections and similarities in oppressive practices in different times and places, by different governments, to understand the fundamental necessity of overthrowing all forms of oppression.

We are pleased that you've written to us, as that demonstrates that you care about the oppressed and are interested in bringing an end to all oppression. We hope you'll write back and let us know if you have further questions or criticisms.

Manhood in Crisis: Black Identity

Black men in Amerika are suffering from a manhood crisis. This is part of the reason we strike out at each other so much and so quickly, because we are super-sensitive about this. What has happened here in North Amerika is we have allowed the Europeans to define for us "our manhood" and it has caused a devastating mental crisis for us. We allowed the Europeans to attach to us a remnant of their mindset, of manhood, which says, "Provide and confront; if attacked, you conquer or die." And we failed this test from day one, because we never viewed slavery as a state of war. And by accepting this circumscribed definition and trying to live up to it, a lot of anger has developed, and causes a process of self-hatred so subtle we don't even recognize it, even as it consumes our very being.

We are parodying the white man's psyche, and becoming co-conspirators in our own demise. Not realizing we possess our own noble purpose and destiny, we have to define for ourselves "our own view of manhood." We don't have to succumb to their beastly mindset and gangster mentality, mimicking Gotti, Dillinger and Scarface. We have the right to *not* be things we're not supposed to be. Especially in a culture that circumscribes our life with false rigid roles. Producing things we don't need, or needing things we cannot produce.

Yes, the racism we face, both covert and over, is part of the reason for our condition, but it is only the symptom, not the cause. Our problem is the disease of dependency that we have practiced since slavery. It is no different today then it was during chattel slavery, when many of our ancestors consigned themselves to the European slave-master, expecting him to fulfill all their needs. We have to understand that our dependency is based on the fear of taking responsibility for our own des-

tiny. Right now we feel that we are powerless and as long as we accept this, and believe it, it will be so. The only thing that holds us back is our own practices, acts and actions.

We must seek economic empowerment. We all know that money is power. We have a consumer gross national product of billions of dollars in our New Afrikan community. Can you imagine if we harness that power and take control of our own destiny?

My people, we have a dream, and yes it takes courage to dream. We have already demonstrated the indestructibility of our Black human spirit. Now he have to show our unselfish devotion, patience and love, to save us from the distress of these final days. We need to set the state for establishing a self-definition of manhood, starting with the understanding that much of our violence toward each other stems from desperation and fear, rather than from authentic manhood. We have a duty to return to our God-selves of ancient times. Being healers, protectors, lovers of our women and nature, as well as celebrators of life, and being ethical and strong.

We must understand that masculinity does not require the denial of deep feelings. We actually start to die when we are afraid to express or act upon our loving feelings. We should stop being "only competitors toward each other" and remember we are also brothers, and our true nature is to cooperate with, and support, each other. We should fund strength and healing in telling the truth to each other. We also deserve the same right of fatherhood as women do in motherhood. Fathers are equal to mothers in their ability to raise children.

We should not be measured only by what we produce, we are not merely our professions. Sure, we make money to support life, but our real challenge that makes life full is the making of the soul, and as Black men we do not have to become more like women in order to reconnect with our souls. And we have to learn how to treat our women more fairly, as well as to have them understand that we deserve to be nurtured as equal partners and together work toward a vision of partnership which does not require Black men to become less than who we are.

pomaja sisi samama nguvu ku vita wa wati
Together we stand, power to the People's War
— Prince Zakia

Get MIM Theory 10
Coming to Grips with The Labor Aristocracy
Lenin's Comintern revived on the imperialist countries, and more science on parasitism — plus the Maoist Black Panther Party period in detail, WEB DuBois, reviews and letters, and more, out to more than 90 pages. Send $6.

Whining Leftist pieces Of shit?

MIM,

So you hate America. I guess we should change our society to model such thriving societies as communist china. Or maybe a wonderful democracy like the Soviet Union. Since Maoism worked so well in China I bet they must have no poverty and a wonderful prison system.

You are right about this capitalism crap. There is no way you can advance with out having to work at a job. Thank goodness that there is crack cocaine to sell. When I hear about all those poor young Americans in jail for drugs I feel so bad for them. I at least hope they enjoy sucking each others cocks.

Have a nice day you whining, leftist pieces of shit!

— Email from a Midwestern campus

MIM responds: Thanks for writing, you've provided us with an excellent example of what Amerika teaches about Communism, and Amerikan culture generally. While China gave up on Communism in 1976 and the former Soviet Union fell to state capitalism in 1956, before their respective capitalist restorations those two countries experienced tremendous sociological and technological advances never matched in any capitalist country. MIM does not seek to emulate state-capitalist China or the budding capitalist regimes in the former Soviet Union, but we do work to build on the successes in both those countries pre-capitalist restoration.

Karl Marx said that the success of a society can be measured by the position of the wimmin in that society. In Maoist China (1949-76) wimmin's representation in government increased dramatically: from 5 percent representation in the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress (NPC-SC — then the highest political body in China) in 1954 to 25 percent representation in that same body in 1975. Since the restoration of capitalism in China, wimmin's representation in the NPC-SC fell to 19.4 percent in 1978, and 12.3 percent in 1994 (See MIM Notes 110 for details).

On your question about China's prison system, we recommend reading *Prisoners of Liberation* by Allyn and Adele Rickett. The book is about the Ricketts' experiences during four years they spent in a Chinese prison for spying during the Korean war. After returning to Amerika, the Ricketts wrote

this tremendously positive account of their experiences in prison, and have since put out newer additions of the book with introductions explaining why they still support the Maoist prison system which sought to educate people through analysis of their own errors, rather than punish them for crimes like being poor, as Amerika does.

On the question of poverty in China under Mao, Ruth Sidel's book *Women and Childcare in China* is an excellent source. Sidel is an Amerikan social worker who spent time in Maoist China studying the educational and health care systems there. Among other interesting figures, Sidel compares infant mortality in Shanghai in 1971 with the rate in New York City for the same year, and finds that Shanghai had a lower rate. Surely a country with more than 90% of its population in the countryside, late industrialization, etc., that beats out the highly industrialized and medically advanced New York City for taking care of its people's health is worth investigating as having a positive system of government.

MIM works to end the oppression of groups of people over other groups. While you argue the standard Amerikan line that the oppressed deserve their oppression, and that anyone who works hard enough can achieve the Amerikan dream, we hope to work with people who understand that state oppression, steady unemployment, discrimination and military occupation of oppressed nations conspire to enforce an unequal standard of living. We will continue to combat oppression so that all human beings will eventually have the opportunity to realize their potentials, and the privileged will cease telling the oppressed that shitty living conditions are their own damn fault.

Sexual Self-Ownership

Dear MIM,

The difference between force and persuasion is the difference between rape and consent. In any group of people, from 2 to 20 billion, there is no force until someone uses it first. The initiation of force is always wrong. It does not matter if the initiators of force are in or out of government. Government bureaucrats do not have some mystical right to violate the freedoms of others. If it is wrong for someone to commit rape as an individual, it must still be wrong for someone to commit rape functioning as an agent of government. If someone takes your shoes without your permission it is theft (an initiation of force). It is theft regardless of whether there is 1 thief or 100 million. It is theft whether your shoes are thrown on an electric wire to mark gang territory, or if the shoes are used as a part of an art exhibit for the good of society. Currently, government initiates force and the initiation of force is always unethical.

Your body belongs to you. Your body is self-owned. Personal rights coincide with property rights. Every individual adult owns their own body and every individual owns the fruits of their labor and every individual is free to trade the fruits of their labor for money, property or services with any other consenting adult. Every individual can use honestly acquired property in any way that does not constitute the initiation of force or fraud, or trespass on the property of another individual. In a free society every individual would enjoy these natural rights.

Majority rule cannot be used to justify an initiation of force. Majority rule is like three wolves and a sheep deciding on what to have for dinner. Minority rights and the individual rights are lost in a majority rule system. In a free society, no group would be able to use government as a tool for domestic imperialism. There would be no tyranny from a majority. Those who initiate force to further their own concerns are unethical. And, unfortunately, our federal, state and local governments are dominated by majoritarians who are using government as a tool to strip away the natural right of self- ownership.

In a free society you could live however you wish as long as you do not initiate force against others. You would decide what charities to give your money to, what to believe in, and how to entertain yourself.

In a free society there would be laws against murder, rape, robbery and fraud. There would be laws against the initiation of force. Government, in a free society, would be prohibited from initiating force.

Those who have read *A Peoples History of the United States* [by Howard Zinn] should take another look inside the book. Read how large corporations have been able to use government as a tool to commit force and fraud. No group, left wing or right wing, should be able to use government as a tool to further their own concerns. No individual, group or government has the right to take the property of any peaceful honest adult. Mandatory taxation (even when used as a tool for redistributing wealth) is an initiation of force and those who initiate force are unethical.

Those of us who work two jobs and live frugally should not have our bodies raped and our property stolen by any government. In fact, no one should. Yet, individuals in the United States who resists the government stealing their property are forcibly imprisoned. Individuals who resists being imprisoned are killed. I find this taking of political prisoners and killing to be unethical.

... The right to be left alone is the beginning of all freedom.

—An East Coast writer

April 29, 1996

MIM replies: Thank you for this very logical and cogently

written essay. We agree with you that in the long-run the goal is self-ownership with regard to sexuality. To obtain such self-ownership, it is necessary to remove the demands of the government and the patriarchy with regard to people's bodies. Furthermore, to achieve that, it will be necessary to abolish government. In a harmonious society based on consent in all social relations, there is no need for the coercion of government.

We disagree with your upholding of property rights, because those property rights cause the use of force by both the private citizen and the citizen seeking advantage through the government. You envision a world of pacifist private property, but we have yet to see such a society. By your position, we would have to oppose the use of force in the U.S. Civil War or any war to free slaves, because it is not persuasion, but force; yet we notice that slave owners could not be persuaded to give up their slaves and had to be fought for thousands of years. We believe it was a great step forward that some decisively violent struggles were fought and won for the first time after centuries of slavery. As long as there was slavery, there was no peace.

Thanks to those violent struggles and acts of dictatorship against slave owners, most of the population is not raised thinking of other people as slaves, whereas it used to be quite normal to be accustomed to slavery. As a result it will now be much easier to proceed to the kind of society you envision than it would have been if we had stayed with slavery.

Private property can be used to hire security guards, private armies and corrupt government officials who will lend out the army for use for private interests. Hoarding of food, medicine, clothing and shelter can also be done to exert economic force against people that kills just as surely as a bullet does.

Hence, any attempt at mere persuasion at this time is met with force – direct and shrouded. In fact, the very words of persuasion used at this time come only in a context of the violence we live in. Can we be sure that a prostitute was persuaded to have sex or did she have to have sex, because she would have starved otherwise? Then what of the housewife or the womyn seeking to become a housewife? And then what of the people looking on at all of that? Can a person who is neither a slave owner nor a slave not be affected by what s/he was brought up in? Can we not say that some people who were neither slaves nor slave owners were content and even enjoyed some aspects of slavery and its justifications?

Whatever words are used now, we cannot know whether it was their pure persuasiveness or some other factor that caused their effect. This is not the fault of any particular individual, but instead it is a general social fact, not remediable through individual action. The preconditions for individual freedom of which you speak do not exist and it is the oppressors who desperately seek to mask this fact by spreading individualist ideologies, as if there were no violent class, nation or gender oppressions.

We admit that we want to use government to take patriarchy and other oppressions down a peg. Anyone who uses organized force is implicitly forming a government. Bringing down slavery was the use of organized force, and like it or not, it was an act of dictatorship over slave owners who were never persuaded to give up their slaves.

This act of government we are proud of, and likewise we will be proud to deprive landowners, agricultural corporations, construction companies, pharmaceutical corporations and others of their private property rights. The right to food, clothing, shelter and medicine is bound up with the right to self-defense and is non-negotiable. Suggesting that these are matters of "persuasion" implies that these rights are negotiable, so we are forced to the logical conclusion that we are indeed defenders of proletarian dictatorship, and proud ones at that.

However, we agree with your pacifist and feminist goals for the long-run, so we wish to state this clearly that we are setting up a dictatorship of the proletariat so as to be accountable during the period that some changes have to be made before we are ready for anarchist communism. We have no doubt that the dictatorship of the proletariat will be used and corrupted by some people as you warn, because violent private interests cannot be overcome overnight. For this reason, we will be mobilizing the people led by the proletariat for cultural revolution in the socialist period.

Any individual can be corrupted. The relatively small group of people in the communist party who have some access to the means of production under socialist dictatorship can be corrupted. Hence, neither individualism nor a strategy without struggle against the bourgeoisie in the communist party has a chance. Only the proletariat is a group of people large enough and devoid of violent private interests that it is meaningless to talk about corrupting it on a global scale, even as it is corrupted in imperialist countries. Without this realistic assessment of the social forces that have the most interest in achieving a world without government, we have no chance for individual freedom.

Once again we thank you for writing. We share much unity with what you said. Though you may not think so, we see glimmerings of communism in your view of rape.

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Open Reply To 'Not the Best' of Anarchists

This debate started in December 1994 with "An Open Letter to the Better Anarchists." That letter, by MC49, and subsequent responses appeared in MIM Theory 8 and MIM Theory 9. The debate has been mirrored in Claustrophobia *(PO Box 77432, Washington DC 20013). This article is a response to an "Open Letter to Maoists (and Potential Maoists) Who Truly Want to End Oppression," which appeared in MIM Theory 9 and the summer 1995 issue of* Claustrophobia. *-ed.*

I'll bet that when MIM issued its "Open Letter to the Better Anarchists," what they had in mind were the genuine communist anarchists, the thousands of well meaning but ideologically confused revolutionaries who get entangled and misled by *petit-bourgeois* ideologies like anarchism or Trotskyism, believing them revolutionary because of what they hear or read, to after many years find the sad truth about anarchism, or Trotskyism, or the hundreds of like sects which, despite "fiery" "revolutionary" rhetoric, really have no other purpose than to confuse and mislead the masses, to deflate or derail their righteous revolutionary rage, to sabotage any serious revolutionary work, so as to preserve the rule of the bourgeoisie: that is, of the current big capitalist ruling class. That's what anarchism and Trotskyism are all about: "fool's gold" mines, mirages, stupefying opium planted *and financed* by the bourgeoisie for the specific purpose of preventing any genuinely revolutionary movement. Anarchism and Trotskyism are, in short, tools of domination by the present bourgeois state.

It is not true that "a lot of anarchist-leaning revolutionaries ... end up getting into Leninism for lack of seeing a coherent anti-authoritarian alternative," but that any genuine revolutionary who, by some mistake, got into anarchism — and unfortunately *thousands* are so misled, hence MIM's letter — by necessity will end fed up with anarchism's, or Trotskyism's, fallaciousness and generally demoralized; and then, depending on where their class consciousness lie, will either end up, if extremely lucky, in a genuine Marxist-Leninist party, or in an openly reactionary organization; and examples abound. That's what anarchism accomplishes!

Notwithstanding MIM's intention, it was not "the best of anarchists" who answered the call but Mr. Brad Sigal with his "Open Letter to Maoists," in which he describes himself as a "'revolutionary anti-authoritarian' or 'anarchist communist,' to differentiate from revolutionaries who are attempting to put themselves in positions of power." Fair enough. And I suppose proof of Mr. Sigal's "anti-authoritarianism" would be to publish his letter in *Love and Rage*, as an ongoing debate, unless he "authoritatively" censors from *Love and Rage* any views he dislikes, even replies to ongoing debates: Nicholas II style.

I mention Nicholas II, Tsar of All-Russias, as a "non-authoritarian" figure according to Pyotr Kropotkin, the "father of anarchosyndicalism." That is, when World War I came, Kropotkin didn't blink an eye to become "anarcho-terrorist" — that is how the "best of anarchists" in Russia called Kropotkin at the time — yet as soon as the workers and peasants of Russia deposed Nicholas II and installed the first state in history ruled by workers and peasants, that is, by the formerly exploited classes, Kropotkin, who had serviley served the Tsar's authority, took up arms against the interests of the workers and peasants of Russia. That is, for Kropotkin — as well as for the "not so good among anarchists" then or now — "anti-authoritarianism" was merely a word for "anti-communism," "fierce leftist" rhetoric notwithstanding.

Generalities abound in Mr. Sigal's letter — as well as in any anarchist publication I ever read — of exactly, or even more or less, how or under what circumstances could this anarchist society come about or what it would look like, giving base to the assertion, common among class-conscious workers, that an anarchist will readily assume anything except responsibility. "There are many potential roads to liberation." But not one single such avenue is detailed. "[Get] us closer to a world without oppressors [by creating] situations of direct popular rule in a collective, egalitarian way." Lofty words but ... how specifically? "Create and enable situations of direct popular rule"? Sure, Mr. Sigal, but could you kindly give us some examples of exactly how would "direct popular rule" look like that is not "authoritarian"? Above all, give us some hint of how, after the state is "abolished," instead of fierce counterrevolutionary war, as has happened after *every* revolution, the ruling class simply will fold its tail between its legs and abide by the will of the majority? Any specific ideas on how to achieve that? Of course not: it's vagueness on top of generalities connected by *non sequiturs* to end up in agnosticism: "No ideology and no party has a lock on the truth, and other revolutionary groups whose ideologies differ slightly from yours are not the enemy." A formula for white *upper* middle class debating clubs; not for desperate proletarians waging a life or death struggle against our *much more powerful and rich* exploiters. But this is far from accidental: the reason Mr. Sigal, or any other anarcho-Trot, hasn't got the faintest idea of what "direct popular rule" would look like, is that not a single one of them

has ever shown any interest or devoted even a TV commercial's time to think how such could realistically come into being. Why? Because *the least intention* any of them has is to ever empower the people: quite the contrary, their intent is to perpetuate the present class relations and class rule. And above all U.S. imperialist world hegemony: which feeds their mouths.

It's no coincidence that phenomena like anarchism and Trotskyism flourish in the rich industrialized countries and among the white *upper* middle class strata in those societies. While on the other hand *all* real revolutions have happened in poorer, less developed countries. While we Marxist-Leninist revolutionaries *act*, hence produce real revolutions, anarcho-Trots merely *react*, that is second-guess what we revolutionaries do, longitudinally splitting hairs to dissect them under a microscope looking for defects: to "expose" before the world — read for the enjoyment of other bourgeois — the shortcomings and "barbarity" or revolutionary rule. The object is to *slander* revolutions: that's what the bourgeoisie — in myriad ways — pays them to do! It's not that anarcho-Trots are incapable of creating: some of their "analyses" are indeed very creative, to the point of stretching the truth beyond its limit. But simply that they refuse to create anything that even remotely might lead the people to revolution: revolution threatens their livelihood and white *upper* middle class privileges as amerikkkan settlers!

Like all first worlders, more so white *upper* middle class ones, anarcho-Trots are a privileged strata, maintaining an artificial lifestyle thanks to the superprofits U.S. imperialism superexploitation superextorts from the oppressed nations of the third world. Enabling them, when they choose to work at all, to earn 100 *or more* times the hourly rates of, say, a Haitian or Guatemalan or Burkina Faso or Bangladesh or Indonesian worker, for *less* demanding work. In a privileged society where the anarcho-Trots, if they so choose, have all facilities to "liberate their desires" and engage in mental masturbation protected by the U.S. kkkonstitution and armed kkkops. That's amerikkka!

Then why do they bother with the "left" phrase-mongering at all? For a variety of reasons: some, as "rebels without a cause" just to shock mom and pop; others to impress someone of the opposite sex; or to impress their teachers with their "brightness," plus a million psychiatric or other "perhaps," *except* any real desire to have a revolution. "So who's the crazy Leninist that wants a revolution here? Are ya crazy or what?" Because a real revolution would end the superprofits from the third world, with which anarcho-Trots, including Brad Sigal, are bribed so as to defend the status quo under "leftist" disguise."

That's the crux of the matter. All else in Sigal's article is mere window dressing, a smokescreen aimed at spreading confusion.

In that light, it is not at all surprising that Mr. Sigal finds no difference between Deng and Mao, or between China and the U.S. He writes:

"What has Deng done that is 'fascist' which Mao didn't do? If your justification for Maoist China is that life-spans doubled, health care, education and production improved, then why not support Deng, too? Production has increased under Deng. But 'productivity' by itself is a capitalist tool of measurement. For that matter, the u.s.a. would deserve support too if these were our only ways to measure 'success.' And the health care and education improvements, while distributed more fairly to more poor peasants and workers by the communist government, came largely as a result of improved technology and distribution — something that could have been done by any system — bourgeois democratic, state socialist, state capitalist, fascist, or whatever."

Dumb question No. 7952: "Mr. Sigal, would you be as unconcerned if it was *your* education, health care or life-span that was at stake?" No explanation why "something that could have been done by any system" was not done in India as it was done in China, or why homelessness exists in the u.s. despite its "ultraefficient" technology and distribution. But never expect anarchists to explain anything; or do anything *except* to attack any and all real revolutions. With holier-than-thou "liberated desires."

Of course productivity matters, but what matters most, Mr. Sigal, is *who* appropriates that production, or the "accumulated production" called capital: that is the key. The difference between Deng and Mao is that while Mao was alive the people of China appropriated its production — which reflects in those battered health, education and living standards statistics you refer to — while under Deng a counterrevolution has begun: not wide open so as not to provoke the people's rage, since "Mao remains popular among the Chinese today," but a counterrevolution nonetheless. And while some production has gone up under Deng — mostly for export industries benefiting foreign investors and Deng's clique in-laws — living, education and health standards have indeed gone down from Mao's era: even more so in rural areas. China and India were "twin nations" in 1947: when India gained independence, in both nations hunger was "endemic and without remedy." In barely a decade China incredibly eradicated hunger, bettered the lot of each and every poor Chinese; India did not and will not, not while capitalism still rules in India. That, Mr. Sigal, is the difference between Deng and Mao. Mao used the power of the state to advance the lot of the poorest among the people: like we communists do; while like all capitalists — or capitalist roaders — Deng misuses the power of the state *against* the people's interests for the profit of his clique: including, I believe, his own son-in-law. That's the difference between the two of them.

That the revolutions in Russia, China, Korea, Cuba and others made mistakes? Sure. Mistakes of course are something no anarcho-Trot revolution will ever make, since there will never, ever be an anarcho-Trot revolution. Unlike the anarcho-Trot ladies and gents, we communists live in a living, changing,

dialectical world in which, besides, we are at WAR: deadly class war demanding *instant* decisions, some good, some bad, some in between. Anarcho-Trots on the other hand live in a fossilized, static world where all reality can be "frozen for purposes of analysis," where one "scholar" can afford to devote her/his entire lifetime to study a one month period of human history: whereupon all other anarcho-Trots will split hairs criticizing her/his findings. Unlike anarcho-Trots we revolutionary communists cannot afford to be perfect: unless we want to get shot. That's the main difference between you and us.

But where Brad Sigal's true colors come alive is when he can't find that much difference between "Maoist China" and the "u.s.a." While likely Mr. Sigal denies the importance or even the existence of social classes, of oppressor and oppressed classes, of bourgeois owners of means of production and proletarian wage-slaves, or of exploiter imperialist nations and exploited third world nations, here Sigal consciously or not comes out defending *his own* class, gender and national privileges as a male europink-ameriKKKan. Why, "the u.s.a. would deserve support too"!

Go, Mr. Sigal, and tell MOVE or almost anyone in south central Los Angeles who has been a victim of police brutality! Go, Mr. Sigal, and tell migrant workers in their sweat shops or when they see themselves forced to work under a raid of poisonous pesticides, while the state of California denies their offspring an education! Go, Mr. Sigal, and tell the 1.5 million surviving Amerindians in that "u.s.a." which according to you deserves as much praise as Red China, and who today would be at least 100 million were it not by the u.s. systematic "ethnic cleansing" and extermination!

Who cares if millions of yucky yellow colored Chinese die of hunger? Who cares if some 15 million yucky "colored" children die yearly of curable diseases, hunger, malnutrition in Latin America, Africa and Asia, as long as Mr. Sigal has enough freedom to "liberation his desires"?

And that is why Brad Sigal, like the vast majority of anarcho-Trots — that is, except the "good anarchists" who are confused by the likes of Brad Sigal's "leftist" posturing and mumbo jumbo — will do anything except to consciously start a revolution. It's not a new phenomenon: look at Kropotkin! Because just as the "u.s.a." today protects Mr. Sigal's privileged livelihood, "non-authoritarian" Tsar Nicholas II protected the "rights" of loyal subjects of the Tsar of All-The-Russias, such as Kropotkin, against "authoritarian" "troublemakers" like Lenin and the Bolsheviks. Small wonder the "anarcho-trenchists" then rebelled against Bolshevik rule: Dumb question No. 4917: Did anarcho-trenchists in Kropotkin's time complain about the Tsar's "personality cult"?

So as long as the "u.s.a." konstitution and kops protect Mr. Sigal's "right" to "mentally masturbate," why should he care whether or not nine-tenths of the human race eats or not? Anarchy at its very best!

No, Mr. Sigal, a real revolution is about: MONEY. Our proletarian MONEY: to buy better living standards, better education, better health care and much more: the worth of feeling ourselves human! That's what it's all about: the MONEY we "colored" third world mulattos produce, which "u.s.a." imperialists extort and steal away from us, to give it to europink ameriKKKan settlers like YOU, to bribe YOU, so YOU can have a privileged life "liberating your desires" at our expense, while we can't even feed our families. And that, Mr. Sigal, is the real reason why WE are very much for revolution, while YOU, despite much "leftist" posturing, are not.

Letter to the Utopian Anarchist Party

From a RAIL comrade
March 17, 1996

Dear UAP supporters,

This letter is a brief critique of the Utopian Anarchist Party's publications #53-56 as well as two pamphlets "Sexual Harassment in Schools" and "Teenagers Wake Up." The publications are extremely problematic with many articles glorifying counterrevolutionary violence and weak organizational structures. There's some interesting stuff on psychology as a tool to oppress kids, but on the whole I think most kids would do better with their shrinks than with these guys (lithium you can kick, but bomb building will get you killed quick).

Utopian Anarchist Party
PO Box 12244
Silver Spring MD
nrkybill@wam.umd.edu

1. Public Campaign Against Child Abusers

One UAP poster defends a university student who posted the telephone number of an alleged child abuser saying "Child Abuse is not a Privacy Issue." While MIM and RAIL recognize that "privacy" law is a tool with which patriarchal societies justify non-interference in the reign of adult-male supremacy (see Catharine MacKinnon, *Feminism Unmodified*), the student's action is still highly problematic. In

the future, we will have revolutionary people's tribunals to try individuals who are suspected of reactionary acts. However, without people's tribunals (which don't have to wait until communists actually have state power, but do require the strong support of the people and a revolutionary force with power equal to the bourgeois state), the student's action denied the alleged abusers a chance to defend themselves and provided no forum for justice. Moreover, it exposed people to the police (and exposed the student to the police), which is a situation even the UAP claims to be against. On the other hand, the student didn't actually shoot the abusers – which is good (we don't want to encourage the UAP) – and the point to be clearest about is that individual actions won't end child abuse. Child abuse is part of the patriarchal society and will only be eliminated by revolutionaries organizing a communist party to seize state power and end patriarchy.

2. Counterrevolutionary Violence

The UAP stupidly shouts out proclamations of focoist violence. (Focoists are people who engage in so-called "revolutionary" violence when conditions are not ripe or when the so-called "revolutionaries" haven't built widespread popular support for the movement.) The UAP supports the bombing of Oklahoma City, the Unabomber, and anarchistic violence "from Spain's Civil War to the May Days of Paris." They say "arson has been an effective tactic used recently against the various public school systems" and "Don't Stop – Shoot the Cop" (#54, p. 1), going on to give advice on how to kill cops! (# 55 p. 1, 3) Focoism is not a successful revolutionary strategy. Anarchists have never successfully defeated imperialism and cannot point to even one successful revolution – not France in 1968 or the Spanish Civil War (See MIM Theory 8 "The Anarchist Ideal and Communist Revolution"). Focoists get themselves killed and, in the process, reinforce the idea that revolutionaries cannot beat the capitalist state. Real revolutionaries – who actually want to win and get to a stateless society one day – need to organize, build public opinion and then wage a revolutionary war. Even the UAP seems to recognize this, saying, "What the anarchist movement needs to do, and what it is doing, is providing media that focuses the anger, frustration and boredom behind these self-destructive behaviors into useful activities – activities that undermine the state..." (#55, p. 2) Shooting cops doesn't undermine the state. There are plenty of people waiting to replace the dead cops, and plenty of government officials ready to spend money on "anti-terrorism" and "public safety." The UAP needs to stop talking shit, study successful revolutions, and start building public opinion for real revolution here in North America.

3. Open Organizing

The UAP at one point disses open organizing, saying, "Now there will be, no doubt, mentally handicapped people out there who will state emphatically in their best black and red ...[and shout] 'So what if the government is spying, we're not breaking any laws," (#54, p. 7) but throughout their 'zine, they publish the name, location and personal e-mail account of their editor. They also help the cops by giving info (including locales and political affiliation) about people who do illegal anti-cop activities. Either they think state repression is a joke (in which case we hope their line will change because they did come to our film showing of *FBI's War on Black America*) or they're FBI agent-provocateurs (either wittingly or unwittingly, it doesn't make any difference).

4. Organization

The UAP writes, "The Communists, in order to get around the obvious problems involved in pyramidal organization, developed to an art the cell system. They had numerous different cells that operated completely separate from each other and with no particular knowledge of each other. The effective and efficient operation of a cell system, under a communist model, is of course dependent on central direction, funding from the top, and outside support, all of which the communists had. Obviously, anarchists have few or none of these things, and so an effective cell organization based upon the Soviet system of operation is impossible." The answer for anarchists is "leaderless resistance ... a system of organization based upon the cell organizations but without central control or direction. (#54, p. 7)

First off, funding doesn't come from the top. Unlike FBI agent-provocateurs, communists serve the people and get their resources and recruits from the people. If the UAP needs money and direction, they need to examine their political line. Focoism is generally an attractive philosophy because its practitioners have neither faith in the masses nor a program for the masses.

Second, commie cells always have knowledge of each other – in terms of political line if not in terms of tactics – that's what it means to be in a party together. The UAP's "leaderless resistance" is a cop-out (meaning it's out of the revolutionary ballpark 'cause it only serves the cops). No central direction means no coordinated activity and no summing up of information. It means no ability to put a plan in action, no ability to see if the plan is successful, and no ability to revise that plan and put forth a new one. It means no successful revolution because there is no way to try out revolutionary strategies on a wide-scale. A major principle of Maoist revolution is "mass-line." Mass-line means that the Party puts out the most advanced revolutionary political line that it thinks the people can take and sees how the people actual take it. Sometimes the people are farther ahead than the party thought, sometimes they're farther behind. Sometimes the party's completely off base and the people say so. The key, however, is that the party can put out the line in a big way (not just in one city or on one campus), the people can respond, and the party can change course – or go full speed ahead. Leaderless resistance, by its very nature, is unable to put forth a mass-line. Therefore it's doomed to little acts of destruction carried out by little bands of terrorists, i.e. focoism. The UAP's cop-killing thing could have been a well-meant mistake (the result of too many Arnold Schwarzenegger movies), but with "leaderless resistance" the

UAP is talking some serious pig shit.

5. "The Problem"

"The American government creates social problems in order to distract the energy of people..." (#54, p. 8) The Amerikkkan government didn't create the social problems, it reflects them. The government is a tool of a particular group of people (White Amerika) foisted on the oppressed Third World and the Black, Latino and Indigenous nations; enforcing patriarchy – men's access and control of wimmin and children's bodies; and maintaining the capitalist system of exploitation. It's not enough to just indict the government, the UAP needs to analyze the sources of oppression.

6. Individualism

"One last word about rebellion – THINK FOR YOURSELF – do it your own way." ("Teenagers Wake Up") The UAP is definitely about 'doing it its own way,' but it sure ain't thinking for itself. The individualistic rebellion of doing drugs, stabbing teachers and smashing windows in cop cars doesn't further the cause of revolution; in fact it helps the state. Revolutionaries don't think about themselves, they serve the people. Remember Huey Newton: Servant of the People? How about Mao? You think he liked long marches? Was he trying to liberate his desires? Was Assata Shakur out for good sex? Hell no! Revolutionaries buckle down to kick the system. They recognize that they might die before ever seeing the fruits of their labor. They study hard, organize hard and fight hard (and they do it in that order).

7. Natural Law

UAP talks a bit about "universal natural law" in typical non-dialectical anarchist fashion (UAP # 56 p. 7). We recommend a healthy reading of Mao's "On Contradiction." (We'll be happy to sell the UAP a copy, but probably won't sit down with them in study group). There's no such thing as universal natural law. Our society is a product of the struggles that went on before and are going on now. "Human nature" is an idea that people in power use to tell you why you can't change things. The reality is that human natures are the products of their environments and that the task of revolutionaries is to change the environment.

8. Patriarchy

The pamphlet "Sexual Harassment in Schools" takes a feel-good, 'liberate your desires' approach to sex. The UAP indicts "anti-sex" rules in schools, busting on the school boards as saying, "You're just flirting and we've made it illegal." While we certainly don't support school boards and bourgeois institutions of edukkkation, the UAP's uncritical acceptance of patriarchal sex is anything but revolutionary. Living in Amerikkkan rape culture, where 'a no doesn't mean no, so a yes can never mean yes,' where the threat of violence is everywhere, where wimmin are constantly harassed by men, where wimmin are constantly raped by men, there is no such thing as "good sex." There is no zipless fuck and no liberation of desire. There is only the eroticization of dominance and submission: gendered males who get off on rape and porno, and gendered females who get off on 'getting fucked.' In everything else but sex, people realize 'getting fucked' is a bad thing; only in sex is it glorified (though its rarely the men that get fucked, everybody knows that men are the fuckers). As such, the UAP's pro-sex rantings can only be taken as patriarchal sex privilege – and if the UAP is so keen on guarding its access to wimmin's bodies, we can hardly take their commitment to "freeing the children" seriously. (To get a revolutionary view of sex, check out MIM Theory 2, "Gender and Revolutionary Feminism.")

There's a general Maoist principle that theory comes from practice and that talking about politics should go hand in hand with doing politics. In the case of the UAP, we can only hope that if they have to talk, they will actually do nothing; or better yet, they can cease talking completely. We would be very happy to struggle with UAP supporters – at a distance – and will exchange paper subscriptions as well as send any literature that you want to buy. Logically, it would seem that anybody who is willing to die for the revolution (though the UAP seems a little overanxious), would live for it. Unfortunately, most focoists rush to die without being too clear on where the revolution is actually at. MIM and RAIL know where the revolution is at and have dedicated their lives to bringing it home. You're welcome to come if you leave that pig shit at home.

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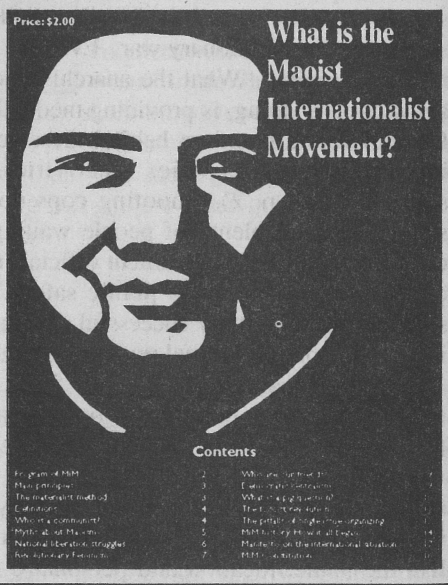


Notice on Language

Advance the Revolutionary Feminist Struggle

People reading MIM publications will notice that we have changed parts of the English language to meet proletarian political purposes. Mao simplified the entire Chinese alphabet to make it more accessible to the masses. While MIM is not yet in a position to make large scale changes in the English language, we make small changes in our lifestyle and culture which are easy and possible within capitalism. These changes advance proletarian struggles by drawing attention to the line behind them. MIM welcomes struggle over these changes as a means of advancing our line on the issues which they represent.

First we changed America to Amerika to remove some legitimacy from "America." We use "Amerika" to refer to the oppressor nation that dominates North America. Amerika is an imperialist nation of Euro-Amerikan settlers and their descendants and honorary members.

Later MIM stopped using "African American" to refer to Blacks in this country because Blacks are neither "African" nor "American." Blacks should strive for national self-determination and not phony integrationism with Amerika. The term "Black" is less than perfect because it implies that we are talking about a group because of its skin color, but it is the best definition of the nation within Amerika. The capital "B" helps to contrast this legitimate nation with the "white" fascist settler nation. We have changed other words and spellings related to analysis on the national question as well.

More recently, MIM substituted terminology that makes it clear that the "United States" does not have a legitimate claim over the territory it stole from indigenous peoples and developed with the use of slave labor imported from Asia, Africa and Latin America. We now substitute "United Snakes" or other derogatory forms of the words, such as "united states."

This summer, MIM decided to substitute the term "womyn" for "woman" with "wimmin" for the plural. We want to make the point that wimmin are not a subset of men as the word "women" implies. MIM is fighting for the end to gender oppression and part of this entails recognizing and fighting the reactionary elements in our culture that suggest that wimmin are less than men.

This decision to use "womyn" followed much struggle within MIM because of the term's reactionary history. Until now this change in terminology has been used by pseudo-feminists who believe in lifestyle politics and usually believe that all men are enemies. Revolutionary feminists reclaimed the term "feminist" from the reactionary white chauvinist wimmin who first used the word and MIM will not relinquish a progressive change in terminology because a few wimmin use the word for incorrect political purposes.

As we move forward in our revolutionary organizing, MIM will continue to make small changes in our use of language to reflect the political line that we support. Many of the changes made so far came as a result of suggestions from our readers, please write to us with your opinions on the subject.

For this issue of MIM Theory, the new terminology has been substituted in our own articles, including reprints that may have originally used the previous forms.

Corrections

Anarchist criticism of the RCP

The article "Unraveling the Political Economy of the Revolutionary Communist Party, USA: Part Two" contains a political error. This article can be found in MIM Theory 5, pp. 92-100 (with the error on page 94), and in MIM's RCP Study Pack, pp. 47-54 (with the error on page 49).

The passage contains a mostly correct quotation from Bob Avakian, chairperson of the Revolutionary Communist Party, USA (RCP-USA). The RCP is a party which practices crypto-Trotskyism (Trotskyism in a phony "Maoist" guise). We therefore have many criticisms of the revisionist RCP. However, the criticism we reprint below is incorrect, and the Avakian quote which precedes it is correct.

Avakian wrote:

> "As Mao stressed, when leadership is in the hands of the genuine Marxists then the masses will have these fundamental rights and powers in actual fact: when leadership is in the hands of revisionists or other representatives of the bourgeoisie, then in actual fact the masses will not have these fundamental rights and powers. And, in turn, whether leadership is genuinely Marxist and really represents the revolutionary interests of the proletariat can only be determined by what line this leadership puts forward and puts into practice. This is what Mao meant when he said that ideological and political line is decisive" (Bob Avakian, *Phony Communism is Dead ... Long Live Real Communism*, RCP Publications, 1992, pp. 97-98).

In 1992, speaking for MIM, MC86 incorrectly replied:

> "MIM begs to disagree. The masses, not the leaders, are the makers of history. Political line is decisive – maybe not in Avakian's netherworld of mentally superior bureaucrats – but decisive in mass practice and only in mass practice.
>
> "What Avakian actually says here is that only the leaders will be able to judge whether or not a political line is correct. This eliminates the masses – and continuation of the Revolution – from the equation. What it leads to is that if the leadership puts forth a line then the line is correct – *if* they are 'genuine' Marxists. This is a nonsensical tautology which boils down to: *the leaders are correct if the leaders are correct!*"

MIM now (1996) replies: MIM's reply to this Avakian quotation was objectively anarchist and therefore incorrect. The only error in the Avakian quotation is minor in comparison: Avakian is correct to apply Mao's idea that "ideological and political line is decisive" to the leadership (of a state, party or other entity). By saying, "This is what Mao meant when he said that...," however, Avakian incorrectly implies that the application of Mao's idea to the leadership is the only possible application of this idea, when in fact it has relevance to the masses and everyday activities as well.

MIM was in greater error, however, when it said that "line is decisive" applied "in mass practice and only in mass practice," which we counterposed to the "netherworld" of leadership. Avakian's minor error above is an error on the side of focusing exclusively on the ideological and political line of the leadership. Marxism-Leninism-Maoism does indeed teach us that it is important for the masses to pay attention to their leaders' ideological and political lines. Understanding this point is a key part of absorbing the lessons of the international proletariat's greatest battle to date, China's Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution (1966-1976). In this battle, Mao and his supporters mobilized the masses to revolt against what was then a handful of party people in positions of authority who were taking the capitalist road.

In the passage above, however, MIM counterposed the masses and their leaders the same way the average anarchist does, negating both the existence of correct proletarian leadership and the need for the masses to distinguish between Marxist leaders and revisionist leaders. It is also factually untrue that Avakian's passage said that "only the leaders will be able to judge whether or not a political line is correct." The masses can and will do this as well.

For a treatment of MIM's disagreements with anarchism and crypto-anarchism, see MIM Theory 8 ("The Anarchist Ideal and Communist Revolution") and Lenin's "What is to be Done?"

Misidentified Scottish comrade

In MIM Theory 10, on page 9, we printed a letter from a comrade who had been arrested in Ireland. S/he was then falsely identified by the editor as "A leading Irish comrade." In fact, the writer was a Scottish comrade.

Missing footnotes

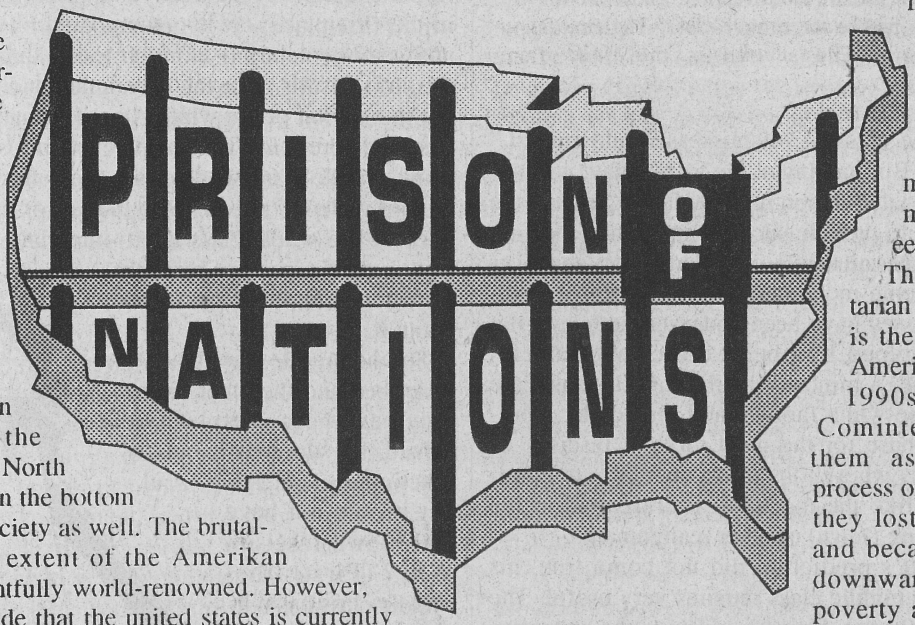
In MIM Theory 10, the editor left the footnotes off, and screwed up the references to them, in the article "the Covert Action Quarterly and Fascism," that began on page 83. Here they are now:

1. [This footnote should have been at the end of the third paragraph] Covert Action Quarterly (CAQ), Spring 1995, "California Über Alles: Proposition 187," pp. 15-20.
2. CAQ Summer 1995, "The Counterterrorist Threat" and "Mugging the Fourth Amendment," pp. 50-57.
3. CAQ Spring 1995, "Rise of Citizen Militias," pp. 26-34.
4. CAQ Summer 1995, "The Militia-U.S. Military Connection," pp. 13-17.
5. CAQ Fall 1995, "Prison Labor," pp. 58-64.
6. CAQ Spring 1995, p. 2.
7. CAQ Fall 1995, "Letter from Noam Chomsky," p. 25.
8. The article "GATT" (MIM Notes, Jan. 1995, pp. 6-7) is an excellent analysis of the political and economic contradictions within the Amerikan white nation.
9. Edwards, H. W., *Labor Aristocracy, Mass Base of Social Democracy*.

Amerikkkan Prisons On Trial

Amerikan Fascism & Prisons

by MC12



The injustice system in general, and the prison system in particular, is the most fascistic element of U.S. society. Besides foreign wars and conquests, it is here that Amerikans concentrate their most terrorist aggressions, mostly upon members of the oppressed nations in North America, and partly on the bottom of white Amerikan society as well. The brutality, oppression and extent of the Amerikan prison system are rightfully world-renowned. However, MIM does not conclude that the united states is currently under a fascist system. In this essay we explain where we do and do not see fascism.

In MIM Theory 10, "Coming to Grips with the Labor Aristocracy," we revived the Comintern of Lenin's analysis of the labor aristocracy to show what they had in common with us today. We discussed briefly a book by R. Palme Dutt, *Fascism and Social Revolution*, published in 1934.(1) The main contribution of that book for our purposes was to help distinguish between the labor aristocracy and the proletariat, to show what a great proportion of the "workers" in the imperialist countries are not in the proletariat.

The 'New Middle Class'

Dutt wrote in particular about the "new middle class," which were the former small independent owners being driven into dependence on employment by big capital.(2) Writing during the 1930s Depression, Dutt thought they were being driven downward *toward* the proletariat. He did not argue that they *were in the proletariat already*. What was important for fascism was that this group, as they lost status, formed the vehicle for the bourgeoisie's expression of fascism.

Dutt defined this middle class as the "many and varied strata between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat (small business men, small and middle peasantry, handicraftsmen, independent workers, small rentiers, liberal professions, technical managerial and commercial employees)."(3)

This group of non-proletarian middle class workers is the vast majority of the Amerikan labor force in the 1990s. Dutt and the Comintern at the time saw them as going through a process of proletarianization, as they lost their independence and became employees on a downward trajectory toward poverty and immiseration. In the imperialist nations, this has not happened, as Dutt would surely see if he had the information that we now have. That is an empirical question; a failure of his prediction. The important political point is still true: this middle class is not a proletarian class.

The "new middle class" in Germany in the 1930s was influenced by high unemployment among educated people, a relative surplus of professionals, and many farmers and small business people going out of business. These became "a large part of the social basis for the desperate armies of Fascism." He goes on:

> "The impoverished middle class is driven from its former philistine slumbers into political activity. ... [T]he new dispossessed and ruined middle-class elements break out as an extremely unstable, violent force potentially revolutionary or, alternately, ultra-reactionary, without clear social basis or consciousness, but recklessly seeking any line of immediate action, which may offer a hope of immediate relief (relief from debts, State aid to small businesses, smashing the large stores, etc.) or the prospect of jobs (the new bureaucracy, mercenary fighting forces, displacement of Jews, war)."(4)

In such conditions, the "dispossessed and ruined" middle class can go either of two ways, Dutt said.

> "Either finance-capital, owning the means of production, can seek to make the middle class its auxiliary, giving a measure of employment, if diminishingly in production, then at any rate increasingly in the tasks of violent coercion of the working class (fascist militia, police-officer class, fascist bureaucracy). Or the proletariat, socialising the means of production, can at last give full scope to all the useful trained and technical abilities with the middle class in the gigantic tasks of social reconstruction. These are the only two alternatives before the middle class. The first is the line of Fascism. The second is the line of Communism."(4)

Insofar as the middle class is "dispossessed and ruined," Dutt's options are true. But looking at the facts today, we cannot say this of the imperialist-nation middle classes. In fact, the capitalists are best able to provide such "relief" when they are sitting on top of an imperialist pile of superprofits; and over time this class has become more stable, not less stable. Still, some in the middle classes have been squeezed, although not nearly to the degree hyped by liberal critics and hopeful Trotskyists alike. These, a minority of the middle class, are today's fascist base. The white farmers and blue-collar workers in militias are the base for the most virulent fascism, as well as the professionals whose jobs or occupations are eliminated by technology (like the mechanical draftsman in the reactionary movie *Falling Down*) or other realignment.

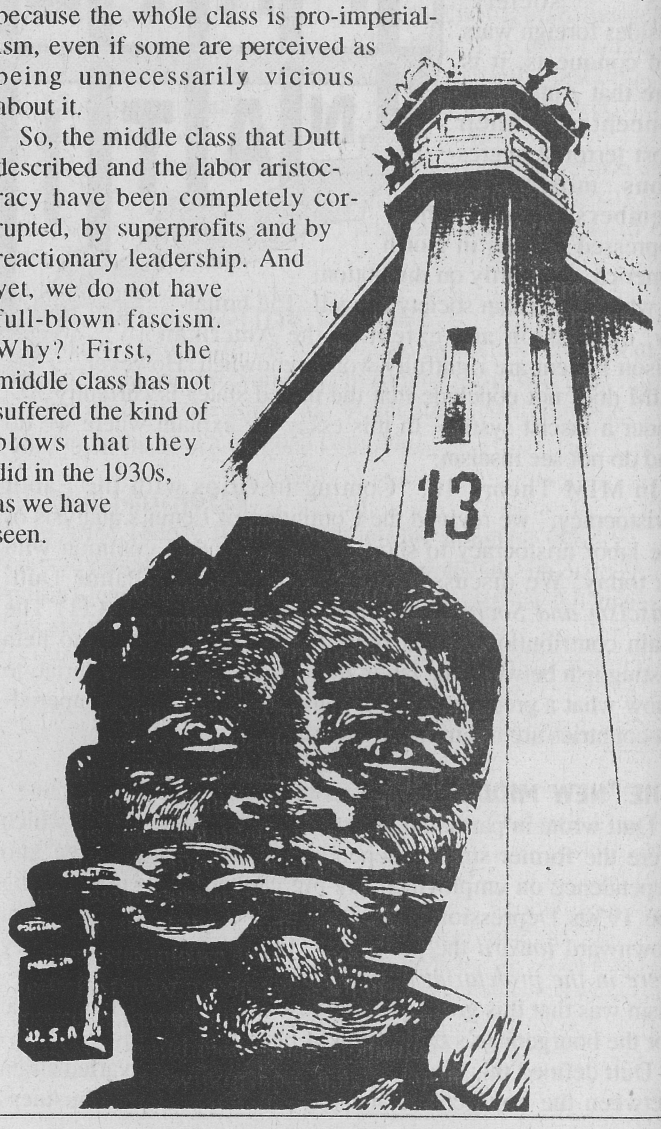
So even though Dutt's prediction did not come true, his political analysis of the middle class remains very useful. The passage of more than 60 years has also given us the chance to learn more about the material basis for the middle class's reactionary character. Dutt attributed their political direction to the nature of working class leadership: "Where the working class movement is strong, follows a revolutionary line, and is able to stand out as the political leader of the fight of all oppressed sections against large capital, there the mass of the petit-bourgeoisie is swept in the wake of the working class." This is what he saw in the post-WWI war wave of revolution.

> "But where the working class movement fails to realise its revolutionary role, follows the leadership of Reformism and thus surrenders to large capital, and even appears to enter into collaboration with it, there the discontented petit-bourgeois elements and declassed proletarian elements begin to look elsewhere for leadership. On this basis Fascism is able to win its hold. In the name of demagogic slogans against large capital and exploiting their grievances, these elements are drawn in practice into the service of large capital."(5)

He concludes, in fact, that "Fascism is able finally to step in and seize the reins, not through its own strength, but through the failure of working-class leadership."(6)

Here MIM would say Dutt has only half the truth. There is a contest between reactionary and revolutionary lines within working class leadership, it is true. Clearly, the leadership of the labor aristocracy has been in collaboration with imperialism, led by reformists, social chauvinists, fascists and other reactionaries, and social democrats. But we have seen from history that the material conditions of imperialism stack the deck against the revolutionary line in its efforts to recruit the labor aristocracy. We cannot look back at the last 60 years of the Amerikan labor aristocracy and say the reason they are not revolutionary is principally because of a failure of leadership. In part, the labor aristocracy is a minority of the white nation in the first place – it is outnumbered by the petit-bourgeoisie and semi-proletariat, more so today than in Dutt's day. But this, too, results from the economic conditions of imperialism: the inundation of the white Amerikan nation with superprofits first and foremost. That helps explain also why, even though some middle-class workers are more fascist than others, they are not violently at odds with the rest of the labor aristocracy – because the whole class is pro-imperialism, even if some are perceived as being unnecessarily vicious about it.

So, the middle class that Dutt described and the labor aristocracy have been completely corrupted, by superprofits and by reactionary leadership. And yet, we do not have full-blown fascism. Why? First, the middle class has not suffered the kind of blows that they did in the 1930s, as we have seen.



Second, and related, the communist movement in the imperialist countries is much weaker now than it was in the post-WWI period. On this second point, Dutt and the Comintern of his day were quite clear.

FASCIST ANTI-COMMUNISM

Dutt summarized fascism this way: "Fascism, in short, is a movement of mixed elements, dominantly petit-bourgeois, but also slum-proletarian and demoralised working class, financed and directed by finance-capital, by the big industrialists, landlords and financiers, to defeat the working-class revolution and smash the working-class organisations."(7) This followed from the Comintern Programme for 1928, which said: "The principal aim of Fascism is to destroy the revolutionary vanguard, i.e., the Communist sections and leading units of the proletariat."(8)

The weakness of the overall communist movement in the united states in the last 25 years has meant that fascism in this respect was not necessary. At the same time, we know that the communist vanguards that there have been – especially the Black Panther Party of the late 1960s – were the most severely repressed under the current injustice system, with some of them still living behind bars on bogus charges. Within prisons, as MIM's mailbag regularly demonstrates, those who suffer the greatest repression are the politically active members of the oppressed nations, the vanguard of revolution in North America. So while the oppressor nation has had a stagnant or at best tiny communist movement, and the oppressed nations have been much more actively opposed to imperialism, the brunt of the fascist element on the continent has been directed at the oppressed nations. This is true to the Comintern's analysis.

So again, insofar as there are elements of fascism here, they are most clearly seen in the prison system.

Remember that fascism is just one variety of capitalism; it is not a wholly different system. In both cases the goals of the bourgeoisie are the same. "The specific character of complete Fascism lies in the *means* adopted toward the realisation of these policies, in the new *social and political mechanism* built up for their realisation."(9) The tricky thing for white Amerika has been to perpetrate something close to fascism on the oppressed nations, without pissing off the pro-imperialist white majority.

In that effort, the legal system has become centrally important. For example, laws restricting citizens' protections from government search and seizure are accepted by the majority only because they perceive most "criminals" to be members of oppressed nations. The selective actions of the repressive state apparatus help as well, as they did in Dutt's day, when he wrote: "Fascism is able to count on the assistance of the greater part of the State forces, of the higher army staffs, of the police authorities, and of the lawcourts and magistry, who exert all their force to crush working-class opposition, while treating Fascist illegality with open connivance (banning of the Red Front alongside permission of the Storm Troops)."(10)

Banning the Red Front and allowing the Storm Troops has its parallel in the crackdown of Black revolutionaries such as the Black Panther Party and the tolerance of such fascists as the militia movement (despite some gentle arrests here and there).

THE EXAMPLE OF PLP

Among those who believe that the labor aristocracy of the imperialist countries is a revolutionary vehicle, there is a tendency to work backward from fascist movements to see evidence that the labor aristocracy is (again) in such dire straits that it is about to become revolutionary for real.

A good example is the Progressive Labor Party (see a more complete review in this issue). PLP considers the Montana "Freemen" to be fascists. "Their ideology mixes racist, sexist, patriotic, and religious myths in the classic fascist formula," PLP wrote in a recent editorial. "The same reactionary ideas can be found in the ideology of the militia movement, the Neo-Nazis, skinheads, and the KKK, the Christian Coalition, and the Nation of Islam. Fascist ideology leads workers to blame the deepening crisis of capitalism on other workers."(11)

How do they see this "deepening crisis"? They say: "Competition and the falling rate of profit force big capitalists to gobble up smaller capitalists or die. Most professional, technical, white collar, and office workers are actually working class wage slaves. This 'proletarianization' of middle strata of the population is a law of capitalism."

The difference between this and the much better Dutt is that PLP is saying these groups already are proletarian, whereas Dutt said they were potential proletarians if they continued downward. We will take a moment to rebut their factual claims before commenting on the argument.

From 1975 to 1987, PLP says, the number of farmers has dropped from nine million to five million, "downsizing corporations have fired millions of white collar workers, and the new Wal-Marts have closed down thousands of small businesses."

It is common among apologists for the labor aristocracy to say that their conditions are ever-worsening, so revolution is sure coming from them soon. PLP goes farther and says that this extends all the way up into the middle classes. It's hard to say if "millions" of white collar workers were downsized in the 12 years they are referring to. But clearly however many lost their jobs, they were more than replaced, because the white collar sectors of the society are growing, not shrinking.

From 1979 to 1989, the number of experienced workers increased by 19.9 million, of which 7.8 million – about 38% of the new jobs – were in "professional services" industries.(12) There is no decline of workers in the white collar industries. Now, some jobs in these industries are worse that others, but most of the new jobs required college training, and were year-round, full time, permanent jobs with above average wages.(13).

In white collar occupations (rather than industries), there were big increases. From 1979 to 1989 the total number of white collar workers increased by 17.4 million, or 30.2% from the 1979 level. Here is how much different white collar occupations grew from 1979 to 1989 (14):

Executives and managers:	+42.0% (to 15.3 million)
Professional specialty:	+35.7% (to 17.7 million)
Technical specialty:	+42.2% (to 7.1 million)
Sales:	+28.3% (to 16.0 million)
Administrative support:	+10.8% (to 21.4 million)

Of all major occupation groups, the only one to decline is the closest to proletarian – semiskilled operatives, which fell 7.3% to 14.6 million.(14) This hurts non-whites more than whites, because whites are underrepresented in blue-collar jobs, and within that category they are even more underrepresented in the low-skilled jobs that lost the most. In the change of occupational structure in the 1980s, the biggest beneficiaries were white wimmin, and the biggest losers were Black and Latino men.(15)

A lot the changes in the occupational structure are manifested in retirements. The biggest decline in labor force participation in the 1980s was among people aged 55-64. The number of retired people in that age group was 17.8 million in 1989, up from 4.9 million in 1969 and 10.4 million in 1979. That's a 70% increase in retired people in that age group in the 1980s.(16) There are also a million pre-retirement age people in "early retirement."(17)

What of the "thousands" of small businesses closed down by Wal-Marts? No doubt Wal-Mart has driven out of business many small shop-owners. And we know that the number of farmers continues to go down as agriculture is ever-more concentrated. But what is the overall trend? Self-employment is increasing, not decreasing, from 8.6 million people in 1980 to 10.3 million in 1993 (up 19.6%). The number of self-employed farmers is indeed falling, from 1.6 million in 1980 to 1.3 million in 1993 (down 18.9%), but they are being more than replaced by self-employed people in other areas.(18)

Contrary to conventional wisdom in Marxist circles, then, there is not a continuous process of small business people being driven into the proletariat. Capital is becoming more and more concentrated, but in the imperialist countries there remains a significant space for small business people to move around at various levels of independence from capitalism.

While white men have not been losers in the recent economy – especially if you count family incomes which include wimmin's incomes – white men in down-trend categories provide a lot of support for the fascist tendencies that exist in mainstream white society, much more than they support revolution at any rate. As we said in MIM Theory 10, however, if we had enough comrades we would try to make sure these potentially disgruntled labor aristocrats had a chance to hear a revolutionary line and act on it if they chose. History is not on the side of that hypothesis, but some of them may turn traitor and join the ranks of the people. Insofar as their reactionary response to their predicament is encouraged by social democratic or other reactionary leaders, combating those lines may have some positive effects.

THE ANTI-"CRIME" FASCISM

In the case of the anti-"crime" wave that feeds fascism in the united states, it is the work of the bourgeoisie, leading the vast middle classes, including primarily those who are *not* losing ground in the current economy. From this we may learn that a suffering middle class is not a prerequisite for fascist tendencies, especially in the case of an imperialist country with internal oppressed nations.

The world may never again know the kind of fascism that existed in Germany in the 1930s, for several reasons. Perhaps the biggest reason is the transference of inter-imperialist aggression out into the Third World, a result of neocolonialism. With neocolonialism, it is no longer such a conflict which particular imperialist controls an oppressed nation, because their economies are relatively open to all imperialists. There is competition, but it is less nationally based and more corporate-based than before. It thus does not appear likely that United Snakes military will attack France over domination of oil in the Arab countries, for example. This is very different from the 1930s.

In that context it also makes sense that the fascist tendencies in imperialist countries are more directed against oppressed nations than they are against other imperialists. (Japan is a convenient exception, being both an imperialist rival and a target of racist association with oppressed nations.) So in terms of Amerikan fascist tendencies, we can see why they are expressed most directly in the injustice and prison systems, the primary tools of oppressor-nation repression in the united states.

Notes:

1. R. Palme Dutt, *Fascism and Social Revolution: A Study of the Economics and Politics of the Extreme Stages of Capitalism and Decay*. International Publishers: New York, 1934.
2. Dutt, p. 104.
3. Dutt, p. 103.
4. Dutt, p. 106.
5. Dutt, p. 107.
6. Dutt, p. 108.
7. Dutt, p. 102.
8. Dutt, p. 109.
9. Dutt, p. 93.
10. Dutt, p. 101.
11. Challenge (PLP's newspaper), April 24, 1996, p. 2. The outrageous inclusion of the Nation of Islam here reflects their view that all nationalism is the same and all bad all the time. This is dealt with more in the other review.
12. Reynolds Farley, ed., *State of the Union: America in the 1990s, Volume One: Economic Trends*. Russell Sage Foundation: New York, 1995. p. 74.
13. Farley, p. 75.
14. Farley, p. 78.
15. Farley, p. 72-73.
16. Farley, p. 64
17. Farley, p. 70.
18. *Statistical Abstract of the United States 1994*, p. 404.

Capital & State Join Hands In Private Prisons

by MC12

"Privatization" is popular in Amerikan politics, but the term is incorrect. People say "privatizing" services is getting the "government off our backs," or using the "free market" to increase "efficiency." All these terms are smokescreens. When the state delegates powers to capital, capital is increasing its share of power in the system. In a simple sense, this is a process of subverting democracy. But under Amerikan imperialism, it's more than that.

On one hand, the melding of capital and the state is an aspect of fascism. When state powers are delegated to capital, the bourgeoisie uses those powers to increase its influence over the state. The democratic process is less involved. On the other hand, this capital-state collaboration usually acts on behalf of the oppressor Amerikan nation. With less imposition from democracy – which means national minorities can't vote, for example – capital-state power can increase national oppression with fewer obstacles. As much as this represents the wishes of the oppressor Amerikan nation – including its middle class and labor aristocracy – it is not completely undemocratic for members of that nation. Its process may be undemocratic, but that does not mean the white nation is not getting what it wants. The anti-"crime" craze is a good example of this: most of the white nation is willing to give up some of the Constitution because they see the change as hurting the oppressed nations more than themselves. Still, the white nation as a whole may benefit in ways that disproportionately aid the upper classes of that nation, or the biological men, and so on. This is a recurring difficulty in the question of fascism – how much are the different classes and groups within the oppressor nation getting what they want, compared to what they may lose.

Most of the white nation is willing to give up some rights because they see the change as hurting the oppressed more than themselves.

We analyze the question of private prisons and related institutions as a means of addressing these issues, which are important for revolutionary science in all imperialist countries today. Understanding the fascist trend and the ever-growing prison system is a requirement for revolution.

Growth of the Industry

Prison privatization started in Southern states, and is now spreading outward.(1) At the beginning of 1996 there were about 100 privately run prisons in operation or development in 18 states, with a capacity of 60,000 inmates at the state, local and federal level.(2) All that growth is basically since 1984, when Hamilton County, Tenn., gave a contract to run the local jail to the Corrections Corporation of America (CCA).

CCA still dominates the 20-company market, keeping about half the privately held prisoners, with 47 facilities and 28,607 beds operating or under construction in 11 states, Puerto Rico, Britain and Australia, at the beginning of 1996.(3) Of the 1.6 million adult prisoners within U.S. borders, fewer than 3% are in private hands, but the rate of growth is extreme. In 1994 alone, the number of inmates in private correctional facilities rose 51%.(4) In 1985 there were only about 1,000 prisoners in private cells.(5)

Private prisons – a term which in this article includes prison-related institutions – began at the impetus of the federal government and big capital, which means they cannot be considered part of an "anti-government" or anti-big-capital trend despite the tendency to treat them as such. The leaders in government were the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) and the federal Bureau of Prisons (BOP). INS started contracting for private detention centers in the early 1980s. Contractors for these centers were led by CCA and Wackenhut Corporation, which is the second biggest private prison contractor.(6) Now INS has 13 detention centers, four of which are run privately (two by CCA), and it rents thousands of cells at many other locations.(7) BOP put all of their pre-release housing centers under private contracts in 1981. Many of these are run by not-for-profit groups.(6)

The federal government is still leading the charge. President Clinton at the end of 1995 announced a proposal to put every new minimum- and low-security prison built by the Federal Bureau of Prisons under private management.(5)

Regarding prisons themselves, private companies worked their way in from the margins, beginning with pre-release programs, healthcare, food service, work release programs, and so on, before beginning with running whole prisons. Once running prisons, George Zoley, a Wackenhut vice president, said they wanted to start in the less contentious area of lower security to earn "public" trust before getting into higher security,

which they are now doing.(6)

Big capital's involvement from the start included the multinationals Bechtel and Wackenhut, and CCA. CCA got venture capital from the Massey Burch Investment Group, which also backed Hospital Corporation of America, the largest U.S. for-profit operator of hospitals.(8)

The most common expressed reasons for privatizing prisons are lower costs and less bureaucracy. In Texas, for example, where private prisons are booming, the state said it was spending $13 per prisoner-day in 1980, but $42 by 1990.(1) Less bureaucracy is said to be important because of the "need" created by the boom in imprisonment. Prisons have to be able to spring up much quicker than the government bureaucracies tend to move.

With private prisons, a company can build a prison and then advertise available space to other governments that have overcrowded systems – empty cells are the bane of private prisons, whereas state-run prisons don't care as much. At the beginning of 1996, for example, Oklahoma planned to ship some 1,700 prisoners to private prisons in Texas. More than 500 were sent there beginning in December. Oklahoma was driven by overcrowding. The state's prisoner population was expected to be 19,751 by June 30, 10% more than the previous year (that includes inmates at state prisons and work centers, as well as those in pre-parole, specialized supervision and on electronic monitoring). Some of Oklahoma's human exports went to the Central Texas Parole Violator Center in San Antonio, which is run by Wackenhut. As of January 1996, 118 were there, 250 were at the Mansfield Law Enforcement Center in Mansfield, Texas, and 139 were at the Limestone County Detention Center in Groesbeck. The last two are run by Capital Correctional Resources, based in Jackson, Miss. Forty-eight wimmin were at the Odessa Detention Center, run by GRW Corporation in Brentwood, Tenn.(9)

Texas got into private prisons in 1989, to encourage the development of new prisons – not just for Texas prisoners but as government-created labor aristocracy jobs as well. Oklahoma is joined by Virginia, Missouri, Utah, and others in the practice of shipping prisoners to private prisons in Texas. CCA is building a 2,000-bed prison in Dallas.(2)

Wackenhut operates two 1,000-bed prisons outside Fort Worth, a 500-bed jail in Lockhart, three state jails, and some parole centers.(10) The company was building three more in January 1996.(2) By late 1995 Wackenhut jailed a total of 9,061 prisoners, including those in Australia and England.(11) In Florida, where Wackenhut is based, they have a contract to manage a 1,138-bed prison to be built in South Bay at a cost of $32 million. They already manage a 750-bed prison in Moore Haven. Wackenhut's contract with the state's Correctional Privatization Commission is for three years, with continuing two-year renewals.(12) Late in 1995 they had contracts coming up for another 6,638 beds at 8 facilities.(11)

Wackenhut also provides security for the 800-mile Alaskan pipeline, NASA, and dozens of airports and government buildings. Founded in 1954, Wackenhut by 1995 employed 53,000 people in 50 countries, with 1996 projected revenue of $1 billion.(13) They made headlines in recent months by protecting Amerikan firms in Russia, which are said to often receive extortion threats from organized crime.(14) Besides Wackenhut Corrections Corp., Wackenhut has divisions in Guatemala, Ecuador, Dominica, Canada, Puerto Rico, and UK. There are also Wackenhut Airline Services, Wackenhut Education Services, Wackenhut Health Services, and Wackenhut Sports Security, plus a few other subsidiaries.(15)

There are also Wackenhut Airline Services, Wackenhut Education Services, Wackenhut Health Services, and Wackenhut Sports Security.

New states are jockeying to get in. The North Carolina legislature last year approved a limited proposal – two medium-security private prisons with space for a total of 1,000 prisoners, or just less than 3% of the 35,000 prison beds the state plans to have by 1998.(5)

Private prisons are only one part of the booming private repressive apparatus. This includes "gated" suburban communities, private security guards, and the widespread private hiring of police officers to do security jobs in uniform, to name a few examples.

In Denver there were almost 15,000 licensed security guards in September 1995, more than twice the 7,168 there were in 1990. The city has 101 licensed security companies. Wackenhut's Denver office tripled its business in the two and a half years before September 1995. At first people attributed the growth to Denver's escalating official "crime" rate in 1992 and 1993. But in 1994 the "crime" rate dropped 13% – and the security industry continued to boom. Pinkerton Security & Investigation Services in 1995 employed 400 security guards in Denver and was "looking to expand," according to a spokesperson.(16)

Licensed security guards, city & county of Denver.(16)

	November 1990	September 1995
Armed guards	1,335	2,269
Unarmed guards	5,833	12,655
Companies	90	101

PRIVATE PROFIT, STATE INTERESTS

It took a few years for private prisons to start making money, but there is no longer any doubt about their profitability. CCA's stock began 1995 at a little more than $8 per share,

and ended the year at more than $37, a 385% increase. By early February 1996 it had passed $47.(3) So confident is CCA that they are riding a wave, they have started building a prison purely on speculation – with no contract – in west Tennessee.(5)

Wackenhut, which works in all forms of private security, has gained from recent events. After the World Trade Center bombing in 1993 their stock rose from $11.70 to $12.09 (+3%). After the Oklahoma city bombing in 1995 it went from $14.75 to $17.75 (+20%). Stock values for Pinkerton Security and Borg-Warner Security also went up after the bombing.(17) Wackenhut's corrections subsidiary only started public trading in July 1994; before that the rest of the company absorbed some prison losses.(8)

As of December 1995, Wackenhut ran food service in about 100 prisons. That's when they bought Service America's prison food service operations. 1996 revenue for Wackenhut's food service division was expected to top $80 million. That put the company in 27 states, with the addition of Pennsylvania, West Virginia, New Jersey, Oregon and Washington.(18) Two months earlier Wackenhut paid $3 million for two Australian security companies, one of whom serves Quantas Airways.(19)

(See the corporate data table that accompanies this article for more details on prison-related companies.)

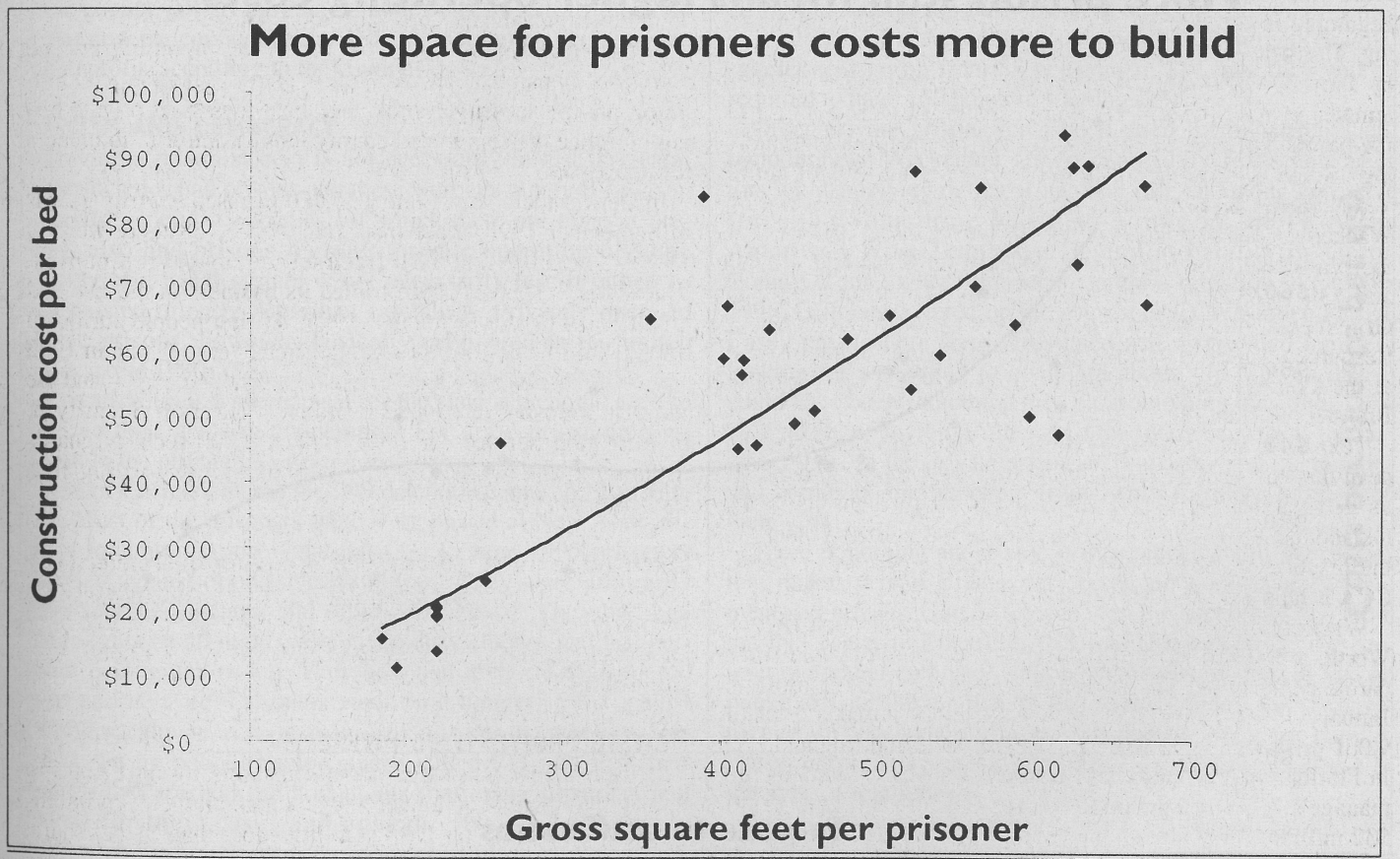
Rates and costs

Whether private prisons save money for the state is an open question, and not very relevant despite media hype to the contrary. As we will see, governments derive benefits from private prisons beyond saving taxpayer money, and all the cost savings come from innovations that the government is doing in their new prisons anyway.

What are the savings they claim? The media reports on studies unquestioningly, such as one by Charles Thomas, a University of Florida "expert on privatized prisons," who said private prisons save states 15-25% percent in building costs and 10-15% percent in operating expenses.(3) Some "academic" books on the subject feature articles by company representatives as objective experts.

One reason for reports of savings is that privately run prisons tend to be new, and newer prisons have technology and architecture to cut down on space and the number of guards. Newer prisons have less space per inmate, which cuts down on construction costs per bed. And they have designs for more electronic monitoring and more efficient use of guards to cut down on labor costs, which is the biggest cost in running a prison.

The Government Accounting Office did a study on prison construction and operating costs in 1992.(20). The first chart, not surprisingly, shows a clear relationship between gross



square feet per inmate and construction costs per bed. The second chart shows an inverse relationship between inmate-staff ratios and operating costs per inmate per day – prisons with fewer staff cost less to run. The charts report on the GAO findings from a survey of government run prisons. This means that whether or not new prisons are privately built and operated, cost motivations alone will tend to push in these directions.

However, this is also good for the oppressive goals of the institutions – less space and more technological control both increase the level of dehumanization and repression for prisoners. So we don't assume cost drives this either.

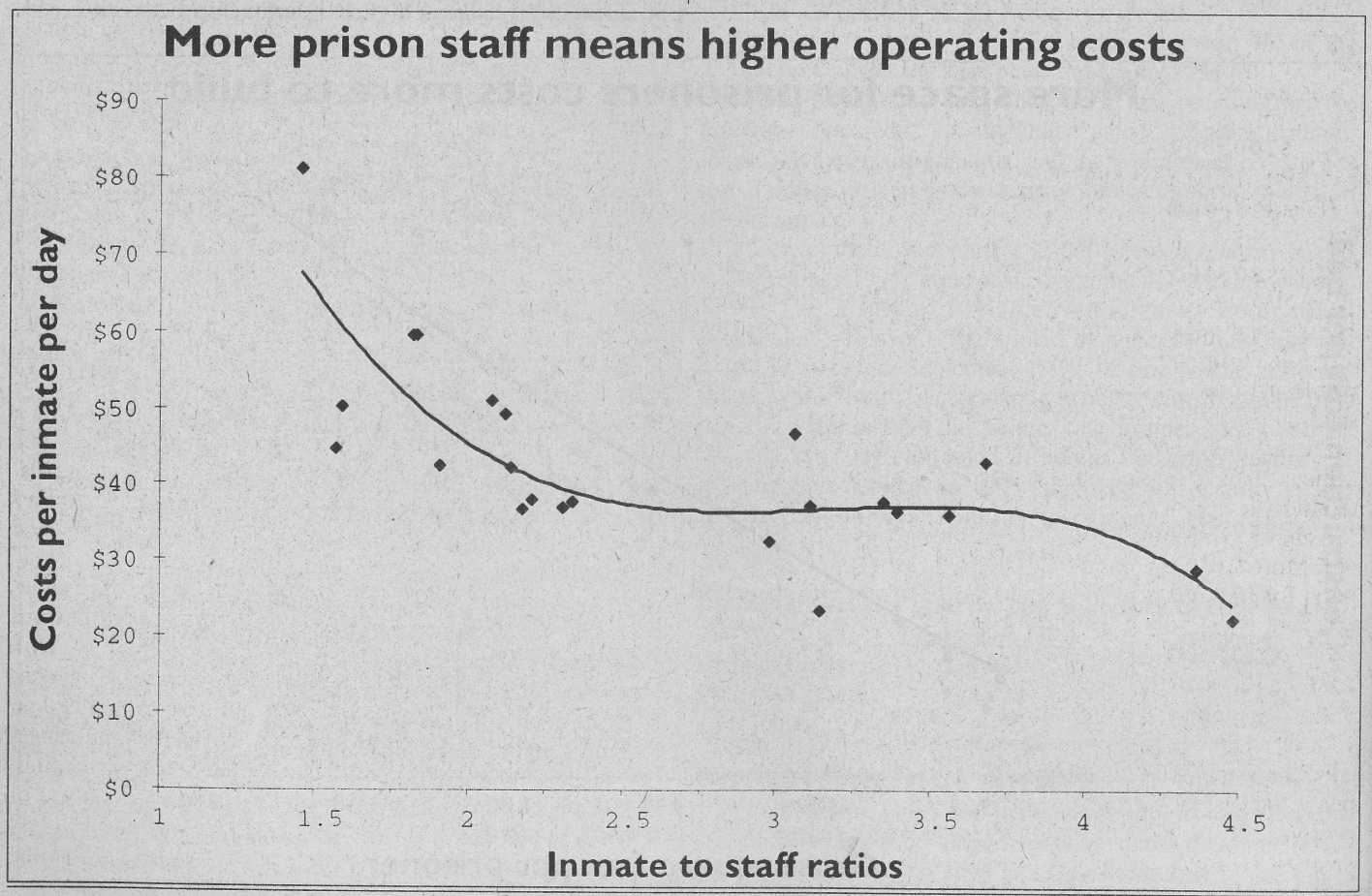
Still, where there are profits to be made efficiency matters. North Carolina, for example, runs some prisons for $45 per inmate day, but their system average is $63.50 because of so many old prisons, state officials say.(5) Almost all privately run prisons are new,(2) which makes comparisons with government prisons unreliable.

In a Tennessee study, CCA prisons there cost $35.38 per prisoner-day. The comparable government run prisons cost $35.76 per prisoner each day, a 1% difference that translated into only $150,000 per year. But the whole system in Tennessee costs $50 per prisoner day, so they falsely hyped private prisons as a way to save $15 per prisoner-day.(5) The mainstream press is happy to feed the hype by reporting questionable studies, as in the claim that "the private operation of two Florida prisons alone would save taxpayers $9 million over three years."(4)

Oklahoma is paying $35-$40 a day for their prisoners in Texas.(9) CCA's daily average charge in 1993 was almost $40 per day.(8)

Private prisons have an economic incentive to stay full, because they bill the government for inmate days.(6) And the prison has to be fully staffed whether it's at just 80% or a full 100% of capacity, so they make the most profits when it's full. That happens to dovetail with the government interest in efficiently increasing incarceration, of course. So if some states have had to release some prisoners because of overcrowding, the profit-driven trade in imprisonment, which takes in prisoners across state lines, solves the problem in a way that serves the combined interests of capital and state.

Guard salaries are a touchy subject for labor aristocracy advocates. Government prison guard unions object to privatization. The New Jersey Pig Benevolent Association offered as evidence a Wackenhut ad offering to hire Florida prison guards for $19,400 per year. In contrast, government guards who go through training at the guard academy and get certified by the New Jersey Police Training Commission before becoming sworn officers, start at $31,000 and get up to $48,000 with



10 years' seniority. Benefits add another 44% to their total compensation.(4)

The Georgia Department of Corrections did a study in 1993 that showed starting salaries at private prisons were 19% less than those at government prisons.(2) In Colorado, wages for private security guards averaged $15,160 in 1994.(16.) Private companies also use less overtime. Labor is 75% of the corrections department budget of states such as New Jersey,(4) so all of this is an incentive for states to use private companies. And it makes the question a typical one of the labor aristocracy fighting to keep their wages up and protect their jobs from downsizing and technology.

In the small city of Seal Beach, in Orange County, Cal., the city privatized their jail and in the first year saved more than $30,000 in salaries – and earned $85,000 from selling extra spaces to the BOP and to prisoners who chose (and could afford) to pay $65 per day to stay there instead of in the rougher county jail. In nearby Irvine, Cal., they turned over operation of the six-cell holding area to Wackenhut. They saved $70,000 in a year, due to lower labor costs, they say. Wackenhut pays clerical workers less than half what the police officers used to be paid for this desk work.(21) And the anti-"crime" masses rest easier knowing those pigs have more time to be out busting heads.

Governments can also make profits without privatization. York County, Penn., for example, is building a new wing of their county jail so they have more cells to rent to the INS. Right now the county charges INS $50 per inmate-day, making a $26 profit, according to the county.(7)

Fascism and Democracy

Having a prison system is not necessarily fascist. Pre-capitalist societies had prisons and these were not a part of fascism. Likewise, socialist societies (of which there are none at present) also had prisons. Further, private operation of some aspects of a penal system is not necessarily fascist either, as this existed in early Amerikan capitalism. Privately operated whole prisons, however, basically originated in the united states in the 1980s.(22)

Privatization is a mechanism for the state and capital each to achieve their goals in cooperation. For a recent example we return to the private INS detention centers.

Esmor Corrections ran the INS detention center in Elizabeth, N.J. Most of the prisoners there were busted at New York airports for immigration violations.(23) In June 1995 prisoners rebelled against oppressive conditions. They were arbitrarily strip searched, beaten and otherwise abused. They had bad food, lights on all night, were given dirty clothes, and had personal belongings stolen. They also had their cases tampered with and delayed. Prisoners went on a hunger strike against conditions almost as soon as it opened. After the rebellion was put down by police (Esmor guards called 911 and fled their posts), INS trashed the documents that many prisoners had saved for their cases and appeals. INS said they were destroyed in the rebellion, but eight Xerox boxes of documents were found in the trash afterwards.(7)

Esmor has a grim record. An INS report on the Elizabeth center said Esmor cut costs by taking prisoners to emergency rooms for medical care, where they are treated free, and by charging prisoners for petty expenses from lost clothing to drinking cups. Immigrant prisoners at the Seattle center barricaded themselves in their rooms to protest conditions last year. At an Esmor boot camp in Tarrant County, Texas, a drill instructor was indicted and three employees were fired after a scandal over coerced sex between guards and female prisoners. Esmor's first halfway house, in Manhattan in 1991, was criticized for problems with vermin, electrical problems and lack of food for prisoners. In Brooklyn last year two Esmor guards were indicted for bribery and conspiring to smuggle undocumented immigrants into the country.(1)

INS closed the Elizabeth center shortly after the uprising, when their investigation turned up evidence that the prisoner charges were true.(23) However, Esmor lost nothing as a result. After the incident, the FBI investigated conditions at the detention center but pressed no charges against anyone from Esmor, although twelve guards at the nearby jail were charged for beating and torturing the immigrants that were imprisoned there after the rebellion. Esmor sold the contract, the equipment and the lease to CCA for $6.2 million and got out easy. Esmor still runs an INS center in Seattle which was not affected by the scandal.(7) Now the INS says the Elizabeth center will be "a national model" under the CCA contract. Guards' salaries will go up from $8 per hour to $14, and they will be required to have 160 hours of training.(23)

Other private prisons have been cited for abuses as well, including two Wackenhut centers charged by Texas state auditors with supplying deficient medical care and using excessive force.(1) Something was also wrong at the CCA-run America's West Tennessee Detention Facility in Tipton County, Tenn., where prisoners started a rebellion in October 1995. Officials covered up the causes: as CCA warden Patrick Casey put it, there were "frustrated and disgruntled inmates" looking for something to complain about. "In a given day, it could have been something they ate, something they didn't like . . . just about anything," he said. One likely cause was the distance between the private prison in Tennessee and the families and homes of the prisoners from North Carolina imprisoned there.(24)

There is nothing about any of these incidents in themselves that makes private prisons any better or worse than government-run prisons. One difference is in the accountability. With the INS center in Elizabeth, INS was able to transfer the contract to another company without anyone losing money and no public officials taking flak. In that sense, it is a political convenience for the state and a way to make money for capital. Prison corporations and governments have made good use of this type of relationship.

In the law permitting private prisons in North Carolina, the

corporate guards will be considered "agents of the state," and allowed to use the same force as state guards.(5) And yet it's easier for the state to deploy private guards at times. For example, in Florida after some tourists were killed, the state hired 258 Wackenhut guards to patrol 48 rest areas on the highways. Journalists' investigations revealed that out of 20 guards, 14 had previously lost their badges at state jobs and would not have been allowed to do the same work for the state.(25)

Also in Florida, in Dania, Broward County, the Sheriff's office was having a hard time persuading people to let them put a work-release program in because of not-in-my-backyard fears. So they turned the site search over to Wackenhut, who was not required to hold hearings because they will own the property and sell a service to the Sheriff. With no public scrutiny of documents or potential sites, the company chose an old motel, over the objections of city residents and nearby businesses.(26)

So private prisons have some state powers but a lot of corporate immunity. With Wackenhut's South Bay prison, the state has said the company does not have to pay property taxes because they are a public service. That took $900,000 in taxes from the county, and the decision also affected other prisons, for a total of $2.5 million in annual property tax exemptions.(27)

The prison system is part of the recruitment of the middle classes and labor aristocracy to the bourgeoisie's social agenda of imperialism.

Some people say private prisons are part of the "crisis of confidence" in the state.(28) In the sense of surface public opinion that may be true. But underneath there is no doubt that privatization is serving the state interests. That is a fascist connection, because one trait of fascism is an anti-government populist style that actually serves capital and the state despite protestations to the contrary (like Pat Buchanan).

A good example of this is the dispute in Sussex, N.J., where the town of 2,300 people replaced their four-member police force with armed uniformed security guards. The state attorney general filed suit to disband the new force.(29) There it was clearly a turf battle between bureaucracies, not a genuinely anti-government attitude.

Along with the state's interest, and capital's profits, there are towns full of labor aristocrats looking for money from prisons. "Many of the localities in Texas aggressively compete with one another for these prisons," said one quoted expert. "From their point of view, it's a clean, nonpolluting, recession-proof industry."(2) As a source of employment, private guards outnumber police by two-to-one.(28)

Besides the American Bar Association and the American Civil Liberties Union, the National Sheriff's Association and public employee unions oppose privatizing prisons on job-protection grounds.(4) Corrections officers have more and more of their own clout. California's corrections officers, who numbered 4,000 in 1980, reached 23,240 by 1995. Their union gave $900,000 to Pete Wilson in his 1990 campaign for California governor.(30)

Fascism is the middle classes and labor aristocracy – under bourgeois leadership – in opposition to the proletariat. So when private security guards replace unionized state employees, some people cry "anti-working class!" In contrast, MIM sees the prison trend in general and the privatization trend in particular as uniting the bourgeoisie and middle classes against the proletariat of oppressed nations. At the same time, it does shift the power away from the blue collar labor aristocracy and toward the white collar semi-proletariat and professional middle classes.

This is played out at the Newport News Shipbuilding yards, where Wackenhut was brought in to replace unionized guards. At the time, the shipyard said they were bringing in Wackenhut in response to guard union complaints about being made to work overtime, and they said there would be no layoffs.(31) But then later that year they laid off union workers and kept Wackenhut. In the third round of layoffs, they let go 19 of the previous security guards and kept more than 30 Wackenhut employees to watch the gates. At the same time they were planning to lay off union janitors and outsource the janitorial service. All that was in the typical vein of downsizing, as the industry faced defense cuts and international competition.(32)

CCA pays wages slightly above what government prison employees get, and most of their employees are not unionized. But they do hire fewer people than older prisons.(3)

Other opposition to profit-making prisons shows us the underlying forces at work. In an all-white rural Pennsylvania town an entrepreneur started a private jail. He talked to his friend Sen. Arlen Specter, who got Washington D.C. Mayor Marion Barry to send a stock of 55 (all Black) prisoners from the overcrowded DC jail. The Pennsylvania townspeople might have liked the idea of the prison, but not the idea of Black "criminals" in their midst. They took up armed vigilante patrols in case of an escape. In the outcry, the prisoners were sent back.(33)

In Colorado, the private guard company at the state capitol lost its contract after an incident in which "skinheads poured paint all over the Indian buffalo statue on the Capitol grounds. The security guard sat, locked inside and watched."(16)

Private security has a populist legitimacy because Amerikan settler mentality says profit-making is more legitimate than government. And among the settler nation the federal government in particular has earned a reputation for helping oppressed nations at the expense of Amerikans. (This is seen

in the "victims' rights" movement, the opposition to affirmative action, and so on.) So this leads people to support private prisons and security forces.

In Florida, St. Lucie County hired Wackenhut to run the metal detectors and X-ray machines at entrances to county courthouses. Sheriff's deputies who previously checked people and packages were to be offered jobs with Wackenhut.(34) In Denver, where they already had guards in the middle- and high-schools, the school administration announced plans to hire outside security firms as full-time district workers to guard elementary schools.(16)

"Efficiency" or cost saving can't explain the Amerikan urge for more security. In Baltimore, for example, the 100-block Charles Village area of the city applied a tax to itself to fund private security in the hope of eliminating petty crime and restoring a "feeling" of security. Johns Hopkins University and the local hospital chipped in as well, with Hopkins donating $55,000, a security vehicle, and a guard to patrol near the university.(35) The Wackenhut guards cost $22,600 per month. In the first six months of the program they assisted in an average 2.5 arrests per month, or $9,000 per arrest.(36)

Overlapping Interests at the Top

From the actions of the state and capital regarding private prisons, we can see their common interests. From an analysis of the specific relationships involved we can concretely prove this overlapping interest and see more about how it works.

Throughout the industry, corporate leaders have histories of working for the state's repressive apparatuses. Like the military industry, these companies are so close to the state as to be profit-making extensions of state power – who also exert influence over the state's direction.

Richard R. Wackenhut, the president and CEO of Wackenhut Corp. since 1986, is a perfect individual example of the overlapping state and private roles in repression. He went to college at the Citadel, then Harvard, and then worked for the Air Force's Defense Investigative Services before joining the Air Force's Office of Special Investigations – jobs requiring top secret clearance. A few years later he went to work for his father's company, which he now runs.(37) Richard's father, George R., was in the U.S. Army in WWII, then in the Army's Office of Special Services from 1950-51, and a special agent in the FBI from 1951-54, before becoming a private security executive. His *Who's Who* listing includes awards such as "Vigilant Patriot award All Ams. Conf. to Combat Communism," "Labor Order of Merit 1st Class," and "CEO of Yr." He was on the National Council of Crime and Delinquency, a member of the Law Enforcement Council, and the Governor's War on Crime. They're both Christian Scientists.(38) They're both poster-boys for imperialism and the repressive apparatus of capital and the state.

Other examples in the industry abound. Chester Lambdin was superintendent the maximum-security Martin Correctional Institution before quitting to move into a superintendent job at the new Wackenhut prison in South Bay.(39) Esmor's management team is led by the former Sheraton Hotel manager James Slattery, who hired two executive officers who both worked for CCA. James Pouland, Esmor's vice president for operations, worked 15 years for the Texas Board of Pardons and Paroles. Ray Jordan was a Forth Worth police officer and then Texas Parole Division supervisor before going to Esmor to run their Fort Worth halfway house.(1)

When Seal Beach, Cal., started their private jail, they got Bud Grossman, a retired regional director of the BOP to do the remodeling and then operate the jail. The city splits expenses and profits with Grossman's company, Corrections Services. Most of the employees at the jail used to be cops, or at least went to police academy. The commander of the Seal Beach jail worked 32 years for the BOP and then was commander at the Terminal Island jail.(21) For that matter, CCA founder and CEO Thomas Beasley went to West Point and eventually became state chairman of the Republican party in Tennessee, and ran Lamar Alexander's first election campaign.(6) Beasley is now one of the top personal contributors to Tennessee Gov. Don Sundquist's re-election campaign, for obvious reasons.(40)

So, if privatization represents an "anti-government" mood in the minds of the middle class and labor aristocracy, in practice these institutions are run by ambassadors between capital and the state, with allegiances to both, and in the interests of both.

Conclusion

In the advanced imperialist countries, the unity of the big bourgeoisie – the international bourgeoisie – and the state is all but complete. So to speak of capital and the state uniting in private prisons as an element of fascism is perhaps moot. The private prison industry is much smaller than the military industry or the auto industry, which are quite integrated into the high levels of the state already.

In the political sense, however, there is an important piece of fascism happening here. Just as the military industry has a role in imperialist aggression and expansionism, so to does the private prison and security industry have a role in the repressive apparatus within the country. And from the point of view of the middle class and labor aristocracy who are so important to fascism, the prison boom and its privatization are seen as populist victories for "normal" people – against the "special interests" and minority groups who are perceived as winning "special privileges." This is a middle class expression of national oppression.

Private prisons and the prison system generally are part of the recruitment of the middle classes and labor aristocracy to the bourgeoisie's social agenda of imperialism. This is therefore a fascist trend, and we can conclude from this that the more Wackenhut (or some similar company) controls the Amerikan prison system, the more fascist this society will be.

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2. The Atlanta Journal and Constitution, Jan. 10, 1996, p. B2.
3. Atlanta Journal and Constitution, Feb. 8, 1996, p. E01.
4. The Record (New Jersey), Sept. 3, 1995. p. A1.
5. Greensboro News & Record, Jan. 1, 1996.
6. Aric Press, "The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly: Private Prisons in the 1980s," in Douglas C. McDonald, ed., *Private Prisons and the Public Interest*. Rutgers U. Press: New Brunswick, 1990.
7. New York Times, July 7, 1996, p. A1.
8. New York Times, Aug. 14, 1994, p. C1.
9. Tulsa World, Jan. 30, 1996.
10. Austin American-Statesman, Jan. 17, 1996, p. B1.
11. Palm Beach Post, September 23, 1995, p. 13B.
12. Palm Beach Post, Dec. 22, 1995, p. 2B.
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14. Journal of Commerce, Sept. 25, 1995.
15. Standard & Poor's Register of Corporations, Directors & Executives.
16. Rocky Mountain News, Sept. 24, 1995.
17. Palm Beach Post, April 25, 1995. p. 5B.
18. Palm Beach Post, Dec. 13, 1995, p. 7B.
19. Palm Beach Post, Sept. 13, 1995. p. 4B.
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21. Los Angeles Times, Aug. 20, 1995. p. B1.
22. "Proprietary Prisons," by Charles Logan, in Law, Society, and Policy, Vol. 4, "The American Prison: Issues in Research and Policy," Lynne Goodstein and Doris Layton MacKenzie, eds. Plenum Press: New York, 1989.
23. The Record (New Jersey), Jan. 18, 1996.
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26. Sun-Sentinel, Jan. 31, 1996.
27. Palm Beach Post, April 21, 1995. p. 1B.
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31. Daily Press (Newport News, Va.). April 3, 1995.
32. Daily Press (Newport News, Va.). Oct. 19, 1995.
33. Press, op cit., p. 31.
34. Palm Beach Post, Oct. 24, 1995. p. 2B.
35. Baltimore Sun, Oct. 17, 1995. p. 1B.
36. Baltimore Sun, Dec. 7, 1995. p. A30.
37. Palm Beach Post, May 22, 1995. p. 71.
38. *Who's Who in America 1996*.
39. Palm Beach Post, February 22, 1995. p. 1B.
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Prison Business: Companies

by MC12

Companies in this list were identified by the word "prison" or "correction" appearing in the text of their most recent Moody's Company Data Report. It is a representative group but not a comprehensive list. Assets and Gross Operating Revenues are most recent available (most assets are 1995 and revenues 1994). In some cases relevant subsidiaries are noted in parentheses. Within each category, companies are listed in order of size. Companies on this list have combined total assets of $5.3 billion.

Design, Construction & Management

Company: Wackenhut
Assets: $212,757,000
Revenues: $747,666,000
Relevant industry: Jail, prison, detention construction and management (Wackenhut Corrections); also international business and government security services.

Company: Corrections Corp. of America
Assets: $130,000,000
Revenues: $120,712,000
Relevant industry: Design, construction and management of private prisons.

Company: Halifax
Assets: $22,107,000
Revenues: $45,603,000
Relevant industry: Prison management

Company: Esmor Correctional Services
Assets: $14,518,000
Revenues: $23,655,000
Relevant industry: Detention centers, boot camps, etc.

Company: Avalon
Assets: $4,726,000
Revenues: $2,568,000
Relevant industry: Private prisons

Company: Mark Solutions

Assets: $4,234,000
Revenues: $7,044,000
Relevant industry: Modular steel cells and "treatment booths" (Mark Correctional Systems).

Company: Correctional Systems
Assets (1994): $233,000
Revenues: $284,000
Relevant industry: Prison/jail management, electronic monitoring systems.

Phones & Communications

Company: Diamond Shamrock
Assets (1994): $2,245,400,000
Revenues (1995): $2,936,800,000
Relevant industry: Prison phones (North American InTeleCom).

Company: Peoples Telephone
Assets: $190,591,000
Revenues: $114,121,000
Relevant industry: Prison pay-phones.

Company: Executone Information Systems
Assets: $189,481,000
Revenues: $291,969,000
Relevant industry: Phone systems.

Company: B.I.
Assets: $36,881,000
Revenues: $29,874,000
Relevant industry: House arrest electronic monitoring systems and jail/prison management software.

Company: T-NETIX
Assets: $34,904,000
Revenues: $27,754,000
Relevant industry: Prison phone call processing.

Health Care

Company: Magellan Health Services
Assets: $983,558,000
Revenues: $1,151,736,000
Relevant industry: Mental health care (Charter Correctional Systems, Inc.)

Company: Coram Healthcare
Assets: $576,115,000
Revenues: $450,496,000
Relevant industry: Health care

Company: Grancare
Assets: $409,191,000
Revenues: $549,220,000
Relevant industry: Prison medical care

Company: Hooper Holmes
Assets: $108,296,000
Revenues: $251,789,000
Relevant industry: Medical staffing

Company: INPHYNET Medical Management
Assets: $93,440,000
Revenues: $253,425,000
Relevant industry: Health care (also services U.S. D.O.D.)

Company: American Service Group
Assets: $32,108,000
Revenues: $109,664,000
Relevant industry: Health care (Prison Health Services, Inc.)

Prison Labor
Profits, Slavery & the State

by MC12

AMENDMENT XIII. SECTION 1. Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, except as a punishment for crime whereof the party shall have been duly convicted, shall exist within the United States or any place subject to their jurisdiction.

So reads the Thirteenth Amendment to the Constitution, ratified by the states on Dec. 6, 1865. Amerikan slavery remains an explicitly legal form of exploitation.

According to Clinton's secretary of labor, Robert Reich, this should put the united states "outside the community of civilized nations." Writing about the question of trade sanctions over human rights cases, Reich said: "Some labor practices simply place countries outside the community of civilized nations. A consensus list of 'core' labor standards will certainly proscribe goods produced by prison or slave labor."(1)

We know that Amerikan law clearly permits both slave and prison labor, a fact that is not relevant in mainstream debate because of the mandatory assumption of Amerikan democratic virtue. But to more than a million prisoners of Amerika, who labor under slave conditions, this hypocrisy is the very heart of the matter.

A Michigan prisoner wrote to MIM in April:

> "Inside prison, the prisoners are slaves, the warden is the slave master, the guards are the overseers, the jobs are the product that we slave over. In prison one makes 25 cents an hour, some much less. This prison has contracts with big corporations. We make sofas, chairs, desks, nightstands, etc. for a quarter an hour. Then they are sold in stores for hundreds of dollars, but you wouldn't know this because you're on the outside. You probably don't believe that prisoners are slaves, but doesn't it make sense? I mean, we are treated like dogs. Matter of fact, if we were treated like dogs, it would be much better."

PRISON LABOR, SLAVE LABOR

Prison labor has been a part of prison systems throughout the history of prisons. In socialist China (1949-1976), prisoners performed various forms of labor as part of their rectification and to contribute to society. There is nothing inherently wrong with prisoners working; just as labor under imperialism is exploitative but that does not make labor inherently oppressive. The class content of the system is decisive as long as there are classes. Under communism when there are no classes, there will be no more need for prisons or prison labor.

The Amerikan prison system is a tool of oppression, especially national oppression. It is a system that perniciously incarcerates people based on their nationality and class. Amerika not only lets the most guilty go free, it lets them run the society and the prison system itself. Amerika incarcerates people for property "crimes" that actually bring society closer to equality rather than hurting the people. In those instances when Amerika does incarcerate people who have committed real crimes against the people, it seeks to destroy their lives and their families without trying to help them make appropriate rectification and meaningful self-criticism.

In such a system, where the labor of prisoners is a part of their oppression and a part of the profit-making system that dehumanizes them and everyone else, where they have no control over their labor or its products, and where they are instruments of production to be used at the whim of their masters, then we must call their prison labor what it is – slavery. We do not use this term in the rhetorical sense of "really bad exploitation," but in the specific sense of forced labor by captive workers, for the profit of others.

This is true in general even though, as we will see, there are some modifications to the prison labor system that make it in some ways approximate a wage labor system – with the obvious fundamental difference of captivity. We find, however, that wage labor in prison mostly represents a concession of the state to capital – to let capital in on some of the slave profits. It also may make prisoners more willing to engage in prison labor, for the same reason that slaves everywhere prefer wage labor. In this case more than most others, however, the economics and conditions of the work are hardly changed at all by the intervention of private capital. We now turn to this in more detail.

GOVERNMENT PRISON INDUSTRIES

Government-run prison industries dominate the prison labor system despite increasing inroads by private prison industries. In 1995 government agency prison industries had sales of $1.2 billion, and private prison industries had sales of $83 million, 6.4% of the total sales.(2) These government sales may be undervalued, however, because their sales are to other agencies, so the prices are arbitrarily fixed.

Of the 1.1 million prisoners in state and federal prisons in 1994, almost half a million (44.6%) were in prison work programs. Another 65,000 were in work release programs.(2)

Wages in government prison industries, if they are paid at all, are as low as 13 cents per day, in Louisiana.(2) Several

states – Arkansas, Georgia and Texas in 1994 – give prisoners no compensation at all.(3) In at least 34 states prisoners make license plates, but also do other manufacturing, as well as undesirable jobs like asbestos removal and waste recycling, and phone work like telemarketing and phone reservations.(4) In a 1994 survey, 31 out of 45 states said their prison labor programs paid for themselves, although with all the funny-money in government industries it is not clear how this is measured.(3)

The Federal Prison Industries, which goes by the trade name UNICOR, has been "satisfying Federal customers" since 1934.(5) It is the labor system of the federal prisons. All of its products are sold to other federal agencies or to federal government contractors. And as UNICOR reminds us: "UNICOR is still a mandatory source: UNICOR has a procurement preference granted by Congress which means that if we can meet the current market price, and your requirements for quality, and a time of delivery, your purchase must by made from UNICOR."

In a supposedly free market, a system of forced labor supplying state-run industries with no competition looks a little awkward, something that has not escaped the UNICOR publicists, who write: "We want you to use us because you want to, not because you have to." They could say the same thing to the workers, if the workers' perceptions mattered as much as the buyers'.

UNICOR says its "primary mission is the productive employment of inmates," although not necessarily to the benefit of the prisoners themselves. They also say UNICOR is "a self-sustaining enterprise, receiving no congressional appropriations for its operational funds. Our income is derived from the products we sell."

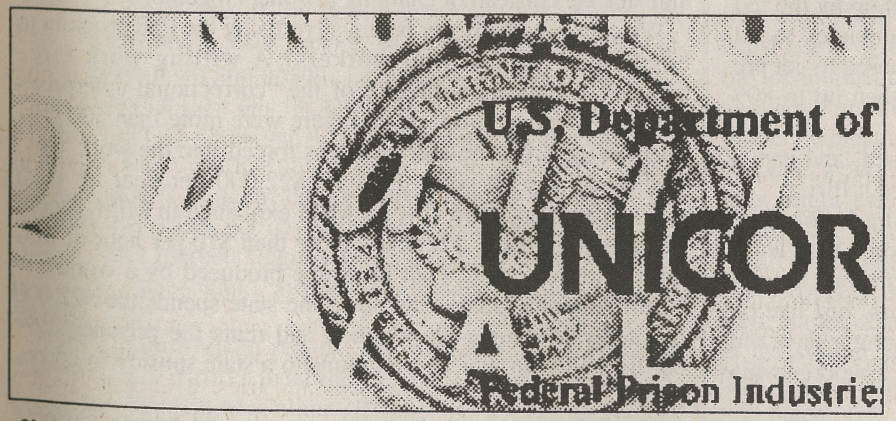
Of course, "operational funds" are only one part of industrial expenses. In fact, in UNICOR as in other government-run prison industries, it does not appear that prison labor alone produces enough to make the system as a whole profitable, yet, for the state – although it is profitable for many companies. Through prison labor the imperialists are able to recoup some of the expenses of their expensive genocidal incarceration system, but profit from prison labor is not the primary goal of the system – which serves important political functions, provides profits to the corporations who build and run prisons, and provides jobs to the labor aristocrats who guard them even as it indoctrinates them with fascist ideology. To pay for all this, the imperialists invest some of their superprofits from Third World nations. If prison labor is more fully used and more efficiently exploited, however, the system as a whole may yet turn a net profit. Preventing that eventuality is one goal of revolutionary prisoners and their allies outside.

UNICOR workers produce furniture, metal products such as shelving and stainless steel food equipment, electronics, signs and decals, envelopes and letterhead, and clothing and textiles. And they sell services such as data services, furniture refinishing, laser toner cartridge remanufacturing, and so on.

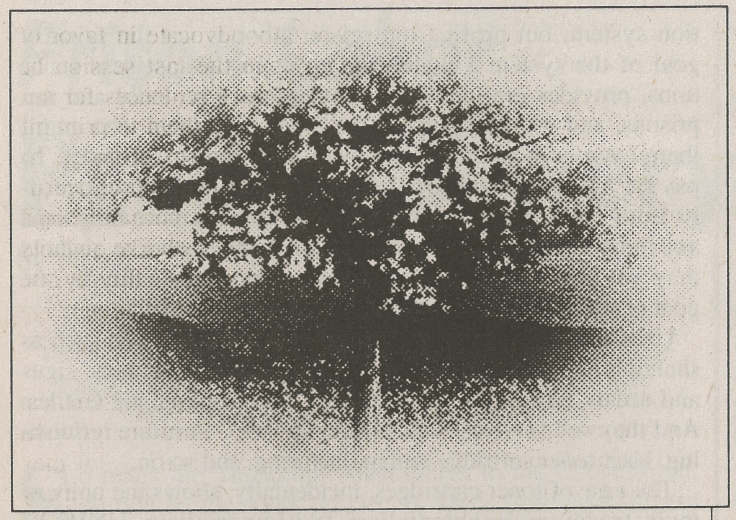
The case of toner cartridges, incidentally, shows the unity of mainstream environmentalism and imperialism. UNICOR writes: "Environmental Protection Agency guidelines mandate the use of recycled toner cartridges in all Federal agencies. Recycling and remanufacturing works. It saves you money while reducing the amount of waste being discarded in landfills, and therefore benefits our environment." The sickly-sweet green tree in the electronic brochure perfectly supports the point (see next page).

States each run their own prison labor system as well. Last year Alabama, Florida and Arizona made headlines by reintroducing chain gangs – groups of prisoners working outside, chained together. Later, under pressure of lawsuits, Alabama agreed the prisoners would no longer be chained together, although their ankles could still be chained together.(6) The chain gang – often engaged in work that is deliberately non-productive, such as breaking rocks for no reason – is a good example of the motives of the prison system, as Mumia Abu-Jamal explained: "The return of this practice, one which has similar symbology as slavery, is a testament to the ulterior motive of U.S. corrections: humiliation. ... For 12 grueling hours a day, men in chains, chafing, biting leg irons, slash and chop at weeds, making Alabama beautiful for tourists. While the highways of 'Bama are beautified, their treatment of sentient humans are uglified. As an act of State Power, corrections is a synonym for 'humiliation,' a legislative echo of degradation."(7)

In Kentucky, more than 2,000 prisoners work in community service outside of prisons. Daviess County claims to have saved more than $600,000 in 1994 by using prisoners to do menial government work. Mason County says it saved $200,000 by using prisoners at their recycling center. They pay $1.25 per day. Statewide, jail prisoners earn $1.25 a day, and prison prisoners earn 75 cents a day on average. Some prisoners get other rewards for vol-



Slave labor monopoly: "Your purchase must be made from UNICOR."



Good for the green? UNICOR's enviro-slavery.

unteering: weekend furloughs, face-to-face visits, and sometimes smoking on the job.(8)

In Carrboro, N.C., prisoners spent one of the hottest days of the year outside chopping grass and picking up trash – their captor said suffering was part of the purpose of their labor. Twelve prisons were renting out 650 prisoners – men and wimmin – as cheap labor to local municipalities. The prisoners get 70 cents per day.(9)

As prisoners shipped across state lines soon learn, state practices vary. A group of prisoners exported from Colorado to the Bowie County jail in Texarkana, Texas, in 1995 found out that the maximum daily wage in Texas was $1, compared to the possible $2 they could receive in Colorado.(10)

Private Prison Industries

In the state-run system prisoners don't have to be paid for their labor. If they work for private companies, they are required to be paid minimum wage. In either case, their "earnings" may be docked to cover "costs of incarceration," taxes, victim restitution funds, and so on. The most common arrangement for prisoners to work in private industry now is the Prison Industry Enhancement (PIE) program set up by the federal government. This allows prison-labor companies to sell their products on the market. Prisoners are supposed to get prevailing local wages or minimum wage – but then up to 80% can be deducted.(4)

Previously, the state had the slaves all to itself, and capital became jealous. So they struck a deal, and called it PIE.

A great proportion of prisoners had nothing before they went into prison, and they will have nothing when they leave, if they leave. The question for the state to work out, then, is what to do with them while they are behind bars. Just like old slavery in the South, the question is less how long a slave will live, but how productive he or she will be as a worker while alive.

Another concern, however, is control over prisoner/slave labor. Prisoners technically volunteer to work for the waged jobs in prison or for prison-labor companies. Karl Marx has explained why this appears an attractive option to many slaves. "In the eyes of the slave a *minimal wage* appears to be a constant quantity, independent of his work. For the free worker, however, the *value of his labour-power* and the average wage *corresponding to it* does not appear to him as something predestined, as something independent of his own labour and determined by the mere needs of his physical existence."(11) This is an incentive for prisoners to choose waged over unwaged prison labor, even when the economics are not very different.

In the mystification of labor under capitalism, Marx also explained, it looks like the slave's whole day of work is producing wealth for the master. In fact, some of the day's work is used to produce the slave's livelihood. For the waged worker, it appears that the whole day's work is for the benefit of the worker, when in fact some of the day's work goes to produce profits for the capitalist.(12)

So the use of private companies in the prison labor system – paying wages, even if they are low and then docked up to 80% – helps capital share in the benefits of prison labor, and it helps the prison system provide more justification for its use of prisoner labor.

For the reactionary middle class and labor aristocracy, clamoring for more and more punishment of "criminals," prison labor is used to justify the billions of dollars poured into the prison system. Wisconsin Gov. Tommy Thompson, in his State of the State address in January, announced the sale of prison labor: "We're putting prisoners to work, both inside our prison walls and alongside our roadways. Next month I will announce the first three companies that will come into our prisons and put inmates to work in activities no other workers want. No more sitting around. Prisoners are going to start working. And they're going to help pay their keep."(13)

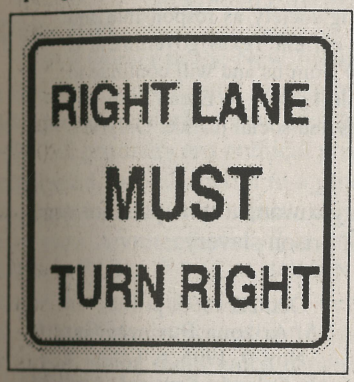
He added that the state would start banning pornography and movies in prisons: "Prisoners won't have time for these things anyway," he said. "They'll be too busy working." His plans include chain gangs of a "high-tech" variety, with stun belts and shackles instead of chaining prisoners together.

Wisconsin had already begun advertising the PIE program to companies: "Can't find workers? A willing work force awaits." Wisconsin's director of the "correctional enterprises bureau," Stephen Kronzer, said there were more than 500 prisoners in the program, and none was forced into the work. Gov. Thompson says it costs the state $22,000 per year for each prisoner in the system.(14) As MIM explained in MIM Theory 10 (and elsewhere), $22,000 – more than $10 per hour of full-time work – is more than the value produced by a worker in North America today. And since the state spends the $22,000 on the system for each prisoner, and rents the prisoner/slave out for less than that, this amounts to a state subsidy to corporations.

The PIE program has proved very popular among business

and the reactionary public. A local business reporter reflected this, writing: "Looking for dependable and motivated employees who are eager to work for minimum wage, won't take vacations or expect even a penny in raises? The state has a labor force for you." At the time Arizona had three companies in the PIE program. There, employers pay minimum wage plus 10% extra to the state for the favor of recruiting workers, then the state takes the usual costs out of the prisoners paychecks. The prisons also provide the convenience of temporary labor. One company hires wimmin from the Arizona Center for Wimmin only when they have peaks in demand.(15)

Another eager reporter wrote: "Instead of sponging off taxpayers, inmates soon could be growing sponges." That was about a loofah farm. Loofahs are the yuppie natural shower sponge that may have medicinal properties as well. With PIE, it became "a cash crop for Florida's prison system ... although it is a labor-intensive crop, the prisoners have plenty of manpower."(16)



Political direction? This sign from UNICOR: $50.

At the Winn Correctional Center in Louisiana, operated by private Corrections Corporation of America (CCA), prisoners work in a clothing factory in the prison making disposable protective clothing. Elsewhere in the Louisiana system, prisoners earn 20 cents or less per hour. In PIE they get minimum wage – and then lose up to 80% of it. The company hoped to get state preferences for their products because of the PIE program. The local AFL-CIO didn't oppose the factory because no one else locally was making the same product, and because minimum wage was the going rate for such work. At another private company within a Louisiana prison (Dixon Correctional Institution) chicken-deboning workers were paid less than minimum wage, even before deductions.(17)

Oregon hosts one of the prison-labor success stories, the Prison Blues brand jeans factory. The state DOC built the factory at Eastern Oregon prison. Their jeans are sold domestically and exported (just like the products of China's prison labor). Prisoners get 75 cents per hour for the first six months, then minimum wage, and eventually up to $6.50 per hour – before as much as 80% is deducted. The factory has a capacity of 175 per shift, two shifts per day. Sales were $914,000 in 1994.(18) Prison Blues markets aggressively, appealing to liberal shoppers with the slogan: "support the rehabilitation of prison inmates."(19)

Naturally, pro-prison zealots are also users of prison labor. In April, a Virginia prisoner sent MIM proof that U.S. Representative Bill McCollum (R-Fla.) was using prison labor at a UNICOR plant to print newsletters for his political campaign.(20) McCollum is a death penalty advocate in favor of taking away *habeas corpus* appeals. In the last session he sponsored a bill, which passed, to increase sentences for sex offenders and child pornographers (he needs them to print his campaign literature – showing how tough on sex offenders he is). And he sponsored a bill, which passed the House, declaring that "the sentence for trafficking in crack cocaine should generally exceed that imposed for trafficking in a like quantity of powder cocaine," quoting the House digest. Finally, he sponsored a bill to require restitution as a part of sentencing for federal crimes, which was absorbed into other legislation.(21)

Similarly, Rep. Jack Metcalf, (R-Langley), used prisoners at the Monroe state prison to make calls for his campaign – an anti-"crime" campaign. He won. Metcalf's staff claim they didn't know it was prison labor when they hired the company to do the work. The Washington Marketing Group, which did the work, is based at a prison – pretty subtle – one of 12 such companies in Washington in early 1995. Other politicians, no doubt jealous over the cheap labor, tried to create a scare by complaining that prisoners could be memorizing names and phone numbers to commit future crimes.(22)

Like any cheap labor alternative, the prison labor system has drawn criticism from the labor aristocracy. As much as they need imperialism to use cheap labor to keep the trough full, they still don't want that labor to hurt their job opportunities or drive down their wages. Unions have complained, and so have competing companies. In 1993, for example, a coalition of federal contractors asked Congress to keep UNICOR out of their markets. At the time, UNICOR had 16,000 prison laborers in 89 factories, $417 million in sales for 1992, and was growing rapidly. The government contractors claimed UNICOR was driving other companies under, and had eliminated 2,000 jobs.(23) The complaints didn't get very far: the imperative for prison labor was too great.

Work and Resistance

Corporate advocates and some prison officials say that prison labor is good for prisoners, because it gives them experience they will need to get jobs on the outside. In one sense, MIM could agree: like any disciplined labor system, it serves the ideological function of preparing workers for wage work in an alienating, hierarchical economy. If prisoners have not had proper "education" before going to jail, teaching them how to be good workers, then the prison might play that role. And, they might even be better off for it when they get out than some other prisoners. But by the same logic, slaves in the old South who learned how to grow cotton might have made better sharecroppers than those who did not. Either way, first they were slaves, then they were sharecroppers. MIM's criticism is of the system. If the system wanted people to get good jobs, they never would have made them penniless "criminals" in the first place.

From reviewing the economics, it appears to MIM that pris-

oners in the wage-slave jobs have more to gain than those who don't get that work, in the narrow economic sense. However, for a political struggle, refusing to work in these industries throws an important wrench in the works. As with all oppressive labor systems, refusing to work is the first tool of the rebel worker.

The power of the prison strike has not escaped revolutionaries in prison, as MIM's mail reflects. One West Virginia prisoner wrote in March:

> "I have been seriously thinking of means to knock the prison industry off its foundation. And the only way I can see it, is for prisoners to quit working for UNICOR. This would have to be a plan implemented through out all the U.S. prisons. I'm sure that the results would be devastating to the prisons themselves in six months or less.
>
> "Prisoners would have to gradually quit the UNICOR. Unfortunately the ones who are paying for incarceration, assessment, FRP, etc., would be hit the worst. They could be subjected to segregation, put on refusal status, or face being shipped to another facility. But you could only do this with so many prisoners. Mass shipment to me is highly unlikely especially with the prison space growing more scarce each day.
>
> "The prisoner would also have to use a backup buddy system. The backup friend, if you can find someone you trust, would receive money on their account, small amounts, to buy for that friend his personal needs at the commissary. If a person tried to stock up on many items before quitting UNICOR, if that person was to be shipped, they would lose everything, since everything is now being shipped home to your family. We have been receiving many women from other institutions and their attempts to stock up on items and clothing has backfired.
>
> "I realize that this would cause a lot of hardship for people. But as I see it, it would be a temporary setback, for a short time, in comparison to the many years that many prisoners have received on petty drug charges. I feel strongly that this plan will work. We need to pull together and knock the wheels off and take the money out of this slave labor operation. Crack the foundation of the prison drug war. Quit UNICOR."(20)

A member of the Texas Prisoners' Labor Union wrote in April:

> "The Texas Prisoners' Labor Union is established to provide inmate laborers with a social and political forum from which to promote principles of social justice in a manner consistent with human rights.
>
> "The Texas Penal Colony is one of the most expansive industries in the United States. However, while the populations have swelled to over capacity, the Texas Correctional Industries programs have not kept in step. As a result, basic concepts of imprisonment in Texas remain unchanged from the prior plantation dictates that induced slavery. Inmate laborers in Texas are wholly uncompensated for their work. Conditions remain barbaric in spite of twenty years of formal litigation, offering inmate laborers little hope for the future.
>
> "There are no effective programs which would allow for an environment wherein rehabilitation and productivity are synonymous. Therefore those of us who remain confined within the penal colony are doomed to remain chained to the revolving door that has long become the accepted policy of incarceration in Texas. Legislators are happy to accept this concept of incarceration as it provides Texans with an ever growing industry, which in turn provides the citizenry of Texas with jobs in various areas of corrections.
>
> "This insane policy must be stopped and it is up to us to stop it. We must bind together so as to form a political base from which we may collectively assert our human rights and negotiate collective bargaining for improved working and living conditions, wages and rehabilitative programs that will allow us to develop skills and habits which will lend to our once again entering society as responsible and productive citizens. Daily the current Texas government is stripping more and more away from us and will continue to do so until there is nothing left. Only WE can stop this onslaught against human rights and social justice. Only WE can help ourselves."(24)

These prisoners show the way toward a new path for organized resistance to the system of prison slavery.

Notes:

1. Robert B. Reich, Washington Post, May 22, 1994, p. C1.
2. *The Corrections Yearbook*, Criminal Justice Institute, 1995.
3. Corrections COMPENDIUM, October 1994.
4. Corrections Today, August 1995.
5. Information on UNICOR from their Internet web site: http://www.unicor.gov.
6. Associated Press June 20, 1996.
7. Mumia Abu-Jamal, column May 11, 1995.
8. Lexington Herald-Leader, July 14, 1995.
9. News & Observer (North Carolina), June 9, 1995, p. B6.
10. Denver Post, Aug. 14, 1995, p. A1.
11. Karl Marx, *Capital*, Vintage Books: New York, 1977. p. 1031-2.
12. Ibid., p. 680.
13. MIM Notes 114, May 15, 1996. For full text of the State of the State address by Tommy Thompson, see http://www.wisgov.state.wi.us.
14. Milwaukee Journal Sentinel, Oct. 22, 1995, p. 1.
15. Arizona Business Gazette, Nov. 9, 1995, p. 1.
16. Orlando Sentinel, April 24, 1995, p. C1.
17. Advocate (Baton Rouge, La.), March 12, 1995, p. A1.
18. Oregonian, Feb. 16, 1995, p. E1.
19. http://www.big-house.com. Inmate photos by Giovanni Stefano Ghidini.
20. MIM Notes 116, June 15, 1996.
21. Bill information from the House of Representatives on Internet at http://www.house.gov.
22. Seattle Times, Feb. 4, 1995, p. A1.
23. Wall Street Journal, Oct. 4, 1993, p. B2.
24. MIM Notes 115, June 1, 1996.

Political Prisoners Revisited

A number of people who support MIM's anti-prisons work have nevertheless criticized our insistence on breaking down the divisions between "political" and other prisoners. In the summer of 1995, MIM took a lot of criticism over statements likening Mumia Abu-Jamal to all other prisoners that some people interpreted as lack of support for his cause. In the months that followed the debate carried on as MIM's anti-prisons work expanded. This section of MIM Theory takes on this issue is greater depth. The section includes a letter reprinted from MIM Notes, MIM's review of two essays – "On Transforming the Colonial and "Criminal" Mentality" and "Toward Clarity on CCs, PPs, and POWs" – which the letter writer sent to us for our comment, and A New York Prisoner's own essay on the subject of political prisoners. —*ed*

Crimes Against the People Aren't Political

Reprinted from MIM Notes 116, June 15, 1996.

Dear MIM,

i am a worker in the New Afrikan Independence Movement. i like your journals and am happy to find much unity in your literature and work. i disagree, however, with your assertion that "all prisoners are political prisoners." i had a nice letter all composed, but fell victim to a glitch, so forgive me for mixing my commentary with quotes from both "Injustice System Convicts Another Latino Youth" (MIM Notes 113) and the NEW AFRIKAN P.O.W. JOURNALS. You say that "all prisoners are political prisoners" because, "The criminal justice system targets oppressed nationals, arresting them at a higher rate and giving them much harsher sentences than their white-youth counterparts..." (and) "No oppressed national can be given a fair trial in the United Snakes' court system. Every facet of law enforcement, from the pigs to the definition of crime to sentencing guidelines, is about protecting white-nation domination..."

All this is true, but it "simply point[s] out the objective colonial relationship" which New Afrikans and other oppressed nationals have to the u.s. empire. We cannot forget that "even reactionary and counter-revolutionary elements within the nation[s] are objective colonial subjects..." (BOOK TWO — TOWARD CLARITY ON CC'S, PP'S, & POW'S, pp. 24-25)

In BOOK SEVEN, "On Transforming the Colonial & 'Criminal' Mentality," We see an attempt to "lay out the true, proper, and NECESSARY criteria for Political Prisoners: PRACTICE is that criteria. On the bottom line, Political Prisoners are revolutionaries; they are conscious and active servants of the people. Political Prisoners direct their energies toward the enemies of the people – they do not commit 'crimes' against the people."(p. 21)

Finally, "...so far as the struggle is concerned it must be realized that it is not the degree of suffering and hardship involved as such that matters: even extreme suffering in itself does not necessarily produce the PRISE DE CONSCIENCE required for the national liberation struggle."(Amilcar Cabral, REVOLUTION IN GUINEA, p. 63)

again, i apologize if the tone of this is pedantic, dry, or academic, but i do think that it's important to enter into this dialogue with y'all. ... in unity & struggle

(p.s. – if you should choose to print this letter, please respect my use of 'i' & 'We,' as this is an important aspect of our understanding that "the community is more important than the individual," and that We "believe in collective struggle" and in "fashioning victory in concert with our brothers & sisters.")

MIM responds: Thank you for writing to MIM. It seems we have much unity. We certainly understand that the relationship between Amerika and the oppressed nations within its borders is a colonial one, but are not content to let that (correct) analysis tell the whole story of prisoners. MIM says that all prisoners are political prisoners because we recognize the process by which some people are classified as "criminals" for stealing cars – and some are classified as legitimate government leaders for stealing whole countries as a political process. We mean to call attention to the criminality of the oppressors in this formulation. So principally we are dealing with the difference between the giant crimes of the oppressor and the lesser crimes of the oppressed.

But it's true that prisoners who've given or risked their lives in the struggle are in a different category still, and MIM recognizes that. It's why we agitate specifically about the frame-up and imprisonment of Mumia Abu-Jamal (for example) and support the movement to free him. We recognize that campaigns around political prisoners like Mumia are important for exploiting contradictions with the enemy and actually winning on their terms (unlikely). But also for the revolutionary movement outside of prison to learn from the examples and leadership of prisoners.

So we'll continue to insist that no matter what the "crime," the more than one million people behind bars in Amerikkka are there because of the political superstructure that supports imperialism, and are in that sense political prisoners. We also recognize that many ordinary prisoners who were not activists before they got to prison have become very political once they got there, which accounts for the high demand among so many prisoners for revolutionary study material. But all that won't stop us from acknowledging heroes of the people too. Keep in touch!

Political Prisoners & the Anti-Imperialist Struggle

by MC44

Prison activism – ranging from reformist legal advocacy to revolutionary organization – involves a broad range of social forces and political lines. Here, MIM reviews two essays – "On Transforming the Colonial and 'Criminal' Mentality" and "Toward Clarity on CC's, PP's, and POW's" – and clarifies and expands our position on political prisoners in response to them. In addition to expressing the views of the letter writer on the previous page, both "Transforming" and "Clarity" challenge the position that all prisoners are political prisoners by arguing that building a nation to successfully challenge and defeat imperialism principally requires a class analysis of the oppressed nation that distinguishes between reactionary lumpen "criminal" ideology and revolutionary mentality and practice. Such distinction, the authors argue, is the difference between prisoners who are merely *captive colonials* (colonial subjects who are in prison for criminal acts, including against the people) and *political prisoners* (colonial subjects in prison for organizing to defeat the oppressor).

MIM has a lot of unity with these essays, concerning the role of leadership and organization in waging a revolutionary struggle for national independence and socialism. Our main point of difference on this question is in our application of the principal contradiction in our anti-prisons agitation. To the authors of "Clarity" and "Transforming," the main object is to address the internal dynamics of the internal colonies. They object to the broad use of the term "political prisoner" because it implies that all oppressed nation prisoners have a political (nationalist) practice. To MIM, our main focus of anti-prison work is to unite all who can be united to smash imperialism and all its tools of oppression, and our use of the term "political prisoners" is important to exposing prison as a colonial tool.

In this essay, MIM maintains our long held position that the masses of oppressed nation "social prisoners" – those in prison convicted of social crimes and who as yet lack a political practice – share the same fundamental social location as their fellow prisoners convicted for being revolutionary leaders of their communities. Making a distinction between political prisoners with a revolutionary practice – like Mumia Abu Jamal and Geronimo Pratt – for the purposes of defending revolutionary leadership is progressive. MIM supports the struggles to free these individuals who are leaders of the proletariat and who the proletariat and the party must defend against state attack.

But we do not pit the leaders against the "social prisoners" to champion the leaders. Our principal focus is on overthrowing imperialism and its injustice system. In analyzing prisons in their function as institutions of social control and national oppression – we see a hypocritical, criminal state bent on locking down whole oppressed nation populations, not just the explicitly revolutionary leadership. It's true, the FBI's Cointelpro helped destroy the Black Panther Party by severely repressing its leadership. MIM also recognizes that the destruction of the BPP as a revolutionary vanguard was a prelude to the dramatic expansion of the Amerikan lockdown of Blacks and Latinos in the last twenty years.

That expansion requires an equally resolute defense of the broad masses of social prisoners – many of whom become radicalized and revolutionary while in prison – and all of whom are viciously repressed by a government that commits far worse crimes on a grander scale and on a daily basis. The proletariat must defend its leaders without conceding that the masses' imprisonment is any less substantively "political" on the part of the oppressor we seek to defeat.

"Political" as Nation-Building

Unlike those liberal activists from the middle forces who believe that most people in prison, who were convicted of crimes with no political content, are justifiably imprisoned by the bourgeois state, "Toward Clarity" correctly argues, as the Black Panther Party did and as MIM does, that the oppressor nation has no legitimacy in trying or imprisoning the oppressed nations: "Prisons are – from the view of the slave/colonial subject – in the hands of the imperialist, the empire, the illegitimate ruler who subjugates the nation."(1)

But illegitimate confinement does not mean that the prisoners themselves are political, the essay argues. "Clarity" disagrees with exceptionalizing the institution of prison as a colonial tool distinct from schools, workplaces, housing or other institutions that constitute colonial subjugation. The essay seems to argue that such exceptionalism detracts from the understanding of all institutions within the mother country (oppressor nation) as illegitimate. While it is true that no oppressor institutions are legitimate institutions for the oppressed, MIM argues that prisoners are particularly well situated to understand and oppose colonialism. The hypocrisy of criminal injustice in meting out punishment, combined with the extreme conditions of the gulags, does distinguish prison from institutions such as education or electoral politics in which there have been some neo-colonial, integrationist gains. Consider Catharine MacKinnon's explanation of legally criminalized rape: "Men who are in prison for rape think it's the dumbest thing that ever happened. … It isn't just a miscarriage

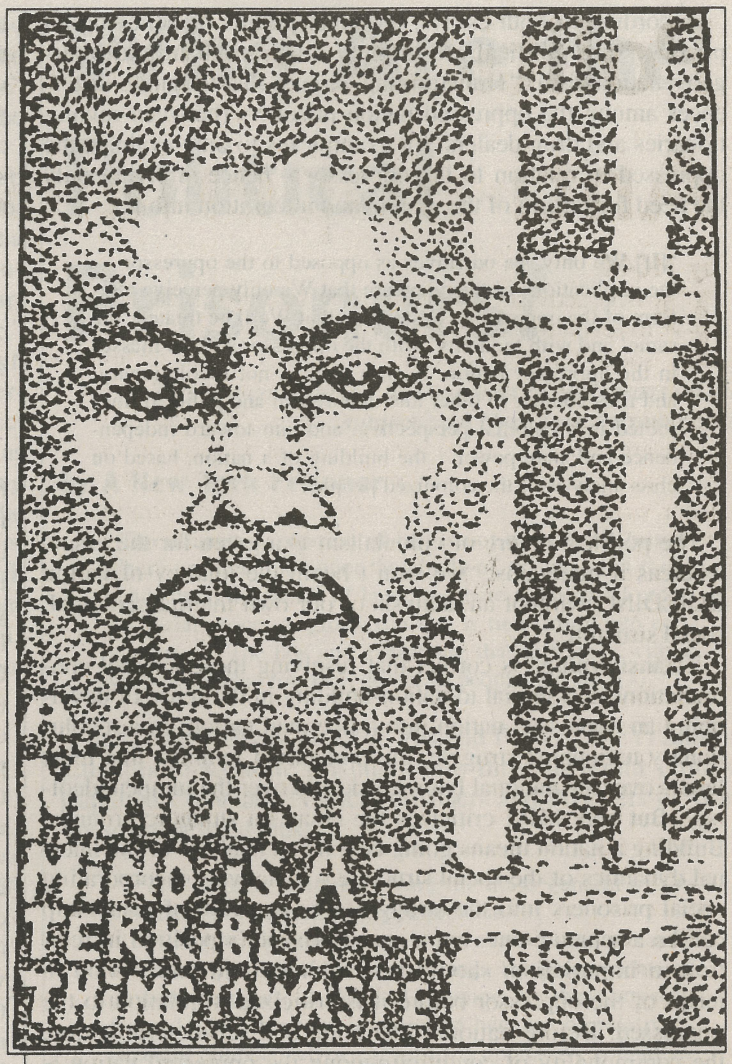
of justice; they were put in jail for something very little different from what most men do all the time and call it sex. The only difference is they got caught."(2)

"Clarity" also argues that prison does not alter the relations among oppressed nations, or between oppressed and oppressor nations; and that there is one movement for Black national liberation, which exists both inside and outside of prison: "the relations between imprisoned Afrikans, and imprisoned nationals of other oppressed nations, the nationals of the oppressor nation, are the same as those which exist outside."(3)

In other words, just because oppressor nation peoples are in prison doesn't make them part of the same class as oppressed nation prisoners, and it doesn't transcend the primacy of nationalist struggle. While MIM believes that the national struggle is principal, and the demographics of the prison population itself reflects that struggle, we do expect prison to yield more oppressor nation revolutionaries than other social institutions. Because the bourgeoisie and petit-bourgeoisie of the oppressor nation are protected (with very few exceptions) from going to prison in the first place, the potential for turning against the system is disproportionately greater for those (relatively propertyless) that are in prison. The 1971 uprising at Attica State Correctional Institution, which included some multi-national forces, is one such example.

Fundamentally, the argument against classifying all prisoners (or even all oppressed nation prisoners) as political is to preserve the term for people with a political practice, as opposed to the masses of lumpen prisoners locked down for non-political crimes. The essays argue that objective, material conditions that cause crime and uneven punishment define oppressed nation prisoners' social location as colonial, but only action on behalf of the nationalist struggle constitutes "political." Political practice includes actions that led to the imprisonment in the first place, or a revolutionary practice adopted by any "captured colonial" while in prison.

But MIM believes that the colonial condition – the contradiction between imperialism and oppressed nations – is principal. The absence of a political practice among the materially oppressed means that those prisoners need leadership, organization and struggle. Since our principal task is to build public opinion against the imperialist state and for communism, we focus on indicting the state for its crimes against the people (including mass imprisonment) and uniting all who can be united for this goal. "Transforming" describes a scene from the film "Battle of Algiers" in which a Prisoner of War recruits a potentially revolutionary "common criminal." While in this situation the differences between the two are significant and should be emphasized – the common criminal is a potential revolutionary in the first place because of political and economic conditions that the National Liberation Front was trying to overthrow. Here in the United Snakes, MIM does not object to distinguishing between prisoners at different stages of political development – but we are able to understand the process



Political and economic conditions make every 'common criminal' a potential revolutionary.

of rapid radicalization of "common criminals" as a profoundly political one. In our agitation, we emphasize that process as reflecting the material basis for revolution.

When we talk about exercising the necessary discipline and leadership to make that revolution, MIM has a lot of unity with "Transforming." The essay correctly argues that adventurism, an easier course for the oppressed masses than "protracted revolutionary struggle," reflects a lack of "confidence in [the oppressed's] ability to win a revolution."(6) The difference between MIM and the authors is that, to the authors, the crucial difference between adventurism and revolution is lost when the term political prisoner is applied to all captured colonials. MIM believes it can make the correct argument about leadership and organization, while not backing down in trying to convince the broadest forces on the outside that all captured colonials are held captive for political reasons – and therefore the institution itself is illegitimate.

According to both essays, the main pitfalls of believing all prisoners are political are implied integrationism and bourgeois nationalism. "Transforming" argues that to ignore differences among the oppressed nation prisoners (between revolutionaries and drug dealers, for example) is to only evaluate the oppressed in relation to the oppressor – hence implying only the need for reform of the system and integration into it:

> "[If] We only see ourselves as opposed to the oppressor ... the implications of this view are that We only perceive a reform of the oppressor's system, so that We'll be treated 'the same' and with 'equality' with the oppressor and the masses in the oppressor nation. Such a view is not revolutionary, and runs counter to other ideo-theoretical and political lines rooted in a colonial perspective, and aim toward independence and state power – the building of a nation, based on class analysis of the colonized people."

The political nature of colonialism is a given for the essay, whereas it maintains: "we won't begin the journey of nation BUILDING without an analysis of our own internal, colonial, social structure."

"Transforming" is correct that resolving these internal contradictions is essential to nation-building in the sense of developing an oppressed nation into a liberated nation. In a revolutionary nationalist struggle, the proletarian feminist line must lead – over the national bourgeoisie and over the lumpen ideology. But here MIM criticizes the essay on strategic grounds. Building a nation means going beyond an analysis of the internal dynamics of the social structure – to actively incorporating social prisoners into the struggle. The question of leadership can be a separate one, but a social prisoner's position in relation to imperialism should be evaluated and understood in terms of the oppressor before it is criticized in relation to the oppressed. Before national liberation and self-determination, the commonality of condition among the oppressed nation is principal over the internal contradictions of the nation. Maoism and dialectics teach us that internal contradictions determine the character of the revolutionary struggle. Emphasizing the difference between, rather than the commonality among, prisoners with an established political practice and "social prisoners" weights that character too heavily against the masses. The oppressed, in other words, have more to gain at this stage of the struggle by stressing that all imprisonment is a political phenomenon, and more to lose by pitting prisoners against each other.

In "Transforming" the author argues that one category for all prisoners as "political" liquidates "the status of Political Prisoners and Prisoners of War, thus, in the same process, liquidating the politics behind the struggle for national liberation" and therefore represents bourgeois nationalism. But we believe that the best road forward for revolutionary nationalism involves uniting all who can be united, and bringing out common interests where they truly exist.

The essay is also concerned that unless we make a distinction between revolutionary actions and acts of rebellion against unjust conditions (the actions of the lumpen, or crime), we will not distinguish between the goal of the former (national independence) and the result of the latter (bourgeois civil rights). It argues that while crime may be perceived as revolutionary in some ways, since it negatively reflects oppressive property relations:

> "If we were to leave the objective analysis/understanding of the economic basis for 'crime' and proceed no further, we end up legitimizing the dope pushers in our communities, the pimps and other backward, reactionary elements who engage in such activity because of the circumstances caused by the present economic order."(4)

MIM does not say "free all prisoners now," because we do believe that some prisoners should and will make self-criticism for their actions under a socialist regime. Elsewhere, MIM has defended imprisonment and self-criticism as it has been practiced by proletarians in socialist China.(5) But "Transforming" goes too far with this concern, and ends up isolating the lumpen element under the reactionary definitions of crime. Consequently, it commits the worse error of implying that the (anti-social) crimes of the oppressed are worse than the crimes of the oppressor. MIM believes that in the course of building public opinion, emphasizing that all imprisonment is substantively political is more important than criticizing the lumpen element at this time.

Along the same lines, both "Transforming" and "Clarity" are concerned that a blurred distinction between rebels against oppressive conditions and political prisoners leads to a reformist idea of change – and insists that only those actions which question the oppressor's right to rule have transcended the criminal mentality – a necessary requisite for building a nation and a revolution. Only prisoners who have made this leap are political prisoners, they say.

MIM believes that this position is essentially undialectical. As Leninists, MIM understands the role of revolutionary leadership and the distinction between rebellion and revolution. We apply this distinction to matters of party-building. But in the case of prisoners, MIM is not facing prisoners as a static population, but is actively organizing, distributing revolutionary study material to, and struggling with "ordinary" prisoners. So we are more concerned with applying revolutionary leadership to an overwhelmingly revolutionary population than we are concerned that we will confuse people into thinking we are elevating rebellious attitudes to revolutionary status. And, as A New York Prisoner points out in the accompanying article, if consciousness rather than material conditions was principal, then oppressed people who did not *think* they were oppressed would not be.

THE MATERIAL BASIS FOR CRIME

We have unity with "Transforming" (quoting Comrade George Jackson) that crime results from "'grossly dispropor-

tionate distribution of wealth and privilege.'" While the authors rightly caution not to take Jackson to mean that the material (objective) causes of crime also automatically "cause" revolution, they do not sufficiently explain what creates the necessary subjective conditions for revolution.

MIM argues that only through the smashing of imperialism and the building of a just society in which groups do not oppress groups will we eradicate crime. "Clarity" argues that "the only way to prevent crime among us is to make a conscious decision to liberate the nation and establish among ourselves a more equitable distribution of wealth and privilege." Here it sounds as though they mean to eradicate crime through conscious decision before the revolution and consequent altering of material conditions. Although we can probably expect crime to decrease during the national liberation struggle, as evidenced by such developments as the gang truce following the 1992 Los Angeles rebellion, MIM emphasizes that it is the changed conditions that will eliminate the material basis for crime – and that only through organization and discipline will we achieve the power to make those changes. Asserting our leadership, and defending imprisoned leaders is key to this struggle – as is an analysis of the whole system that incorporates all prisoners into a potentially revolutionary population.

Notes:

1. Toward Clarity on CC's, PP's, and POW's, by Y. Y. Shanna.
2. Catharine MacKinnon, *Feminism Unmodified*, p. 88
3. Toward Clarity on CC's, PP's, and POW's.
4. "On Transforming the Colonial and 'Criminal' Mentality." Reprinted from New Afrikan P.O.W. Journal, Book Seven, Spear and Shield Publications, 1340 W. Irving Park Road, Suite 108, Chicago, IL 60613.
5. See *Prisoners of Liberation* by Adele and Allyn Rickett.
6. On Transforming the Colonial and "Criminal" Mentality.

Why is MIM Underground?

Read *Agents of Repression: The FBI's Secret Wars Against the Black Panther Party and the American Indian Movement*, by Ward Churchill & Jim Vander Wall. This history of the birth of the Federal Bureau of Investigation and a detailed account of the FBI's work infiltrating and splitting and wrecking revolutionary organizations, including murders and frame-ups, helps answer the question. The book demonstrates the extent of the threat to anti-imperialist movements, and the long-term futility of the FBI's work.

Send $17 to "MIM Distributors," PO Box 3576, Ann Arbor, MI 48106-3576.

Who Are the Political Prisoners?

This is a compilation by the editor of two essays on the subject by A New York Prisoner. -ed.

by A New York Prisoner

> "The ultimate expression of law is not order – it's prison. There are hundreds upon hundreds of prisons, and thousands upon thousands of laws, yet there is no social order, no social peace. Anglo-Saxon law is tied firmly into economics. ... The law and everything that interlocks with it was constructed for poor, desperate people like me."(1)

In "Toward clarity on CCs, PPs and POWs," Y. Y. Shanna attempts to separate prisoners into three different groups: Captured Colonials, Political Prisoners and Prisoners of War. These are defined thus:

> "1) Captured Colonials – are the mass general prison populations which Afrikans compromise.
>
> "2) Political Prisoner – one who has made and acts on a conscious political decision to change the present state of property relations. ... Political prisoners are those arrested, framed and otherwise imprisoned because of relatively peaceful political activity against the oppressive conditions of the people. Political prisoners are also those captured colonials inside the walls who have adopted a 'revolutionary mentality' and become politically active.
>
> "3) Prisoner of War – Afrikans who have been imprisoned as a result of their having taken up arms or otherwise engaged in acts of organized revolutionary violence against the u.s. imperialist state. ... We also regard as prisoners of war those captured colonials and political prisoners who consciously (or otherwise) commit acts of revolutionary violence while behind the walls..."(2)

The author of this paper says all Afrikans are POWs and PPs, but only in relation to the oppressor nation; only those who understand/partake/recognize the nature of their oppression are truly worthy of being labeled a political prisoner or prisoner of war, as the three above-mentioned criteria point out.

> "Men have constantly made up for themselves false conceptions about themselves, about what they are and what they ought to be. ... Once upon a time an honest fellow had the

> idea that men were drowned in water only because they were obsessed with the idea of gravity. If they were to knock this idea out of their heads, say by stating it to be a superstition, a religious idea, they would be sublimely proof against any danger from water. His whole life long he fought against the illusion of gravity, of whose harmful results all statistics brought him new and manifold evidence."(3)

But Y.Y. Shanna does just this: one becomes a political prisoner by an act of self-perception, and as long as a prisoner remains ignorant we cannot call that prisoner a political prisoner!

We must understand that under the current conditions classes are constant while the people who occupy them aren't. People can commit class, national or gender suicide, but this does not negate the entire class, nation or gender that they came from. If Y. Y. Shanna is ready to say that consciousness determines your status then those who think they aren't oppressed would be free from oppression.

The revolution is put on stand-still to bring attention to a few individuals.

According to the author, "the only way to prevent crime among us is to make a conscious decision to liberate the nation." Eureka! Our solution to crime is to simply change our minds, we need not even fight! This is all wrong and reeks of idealism. "Crime" develops under specific conditions, not due to a frame of mind but due to the material conditions that give shape to the frame of mind. The author recognizes that objectively all prisoners are political prisoners when s/he says, "Yeah, all Afrikans are POWs and PPs whether inside or outside of kamps" — but then goes on to say that "all these simply point out the objective colonial relationship" and that "the objective existence of Afrikan peoples' enslavement over three centuries ago don't alone make for national liberation."

But the colonial relationship *does* make these political prisoners, whether they yet know it or not. The objective conditions give rise to the *necessity* for national liberation struggle, and make it possible. We recognize that it is the objective conditions that give rise to the subjective and no mysterious soul, spirit or God that allows us to think the way we do. So when one negates the objective one falls right into the pit of idealism or simply resorts to irrelevant psychobabble. The author claims to be making "an analysis of the colony's social structure," but in reality the author is making an analysis of the subjective structure while negating the objective reality. The author is right when s/he says that we need "an analysis of our own internal, colonial structure," and MIM has begun to do this.(4)

Just because there are compradors who may commit a class suicide does not mean that the comprador class does not exist. We must define the classes of the internal colonies according to their relationship to the U.S. Empire. Just as every Black birth is a political birth, all prisoners are political prisoners as a group, due to the conditions of national oppression under which their position is imposed.

Y.Y. Shanna makes a statement that "If we continue to see nothing but 'All Afrikans are POW's and PPs', we'll end up struggling against imperialism, but not necessarily for national liberation." This is totally incorrect, it's utterly backward. By only recognizing a few individuals as only POW's and PP's, then we will only be struggling against imperialism and not for national liberation, such as the Big Bourgeoisie does and those who have an otherwise national bourgeois mentality.

It's well known that the national bourgeois, such as the NAACP, Martin Luther King Jr. and other bourgeois integrationists and assimilationists, are those struggling against imperialism but not for national liberation. History has shown that genuine national liberation cannot be realized without a genuine Marxist-Leninist-Maoist organization leading it. The national bourgeoisie is incapable of leading the nation to genuine liberation. All the national bourgeoisie is capable of doing is struggling against one master in order to find another one. Witness Cuba, Algeria, Egypt, South Africa, etc., where there had been "national liberation" struggles but no national liberation.

These Sisyphus-like acts are part of the national bourgeoisie's bankruptcy. Such is various prison movements, they are struggling not against the injustice, abuse, oppression and exploitation of all prisoners but only for a selected few prisoners, as if these prisoners are special and merit more attention than the rest. By doing this, they are struggling against imperialism for certain people but not national oppression, or liberation as a whole. The revolution is put on stand-still in order to get a couple of individuals released, cases recognized, or injustice against those few individuals brought to attention. This is a form of bourgeois individualism.

There is a strong revolutionary potential in the broad majority of prisoners. True, there is an uneven development to revolution and some advance in revolutionary leadership, but those who are advanced in revolutionary science have a duty to transform the potential into kinetic. Lenin tells us that "we cannot – nor can anybody else – calculate exactly what portion of the proletariat is following and will follow the social-chauvinists and opportunists. This will only be revealed through struggle, it will be definitely decided only by the socialist revolution."(5)

Applied to prisoners of the oppressed nationalities it would say this:

> "we cannot – nor can anybody else – calculate exactly what portion of the prison population will follow the reactionaries or become or are stool pigeons. This will only be

revealed through organizing prisoners as a whole against imprisonment, imperialism, oppression and exploitation, it will be definitely decided through national liberation and scientific socialist revolution. In order to do this we must start by recognizing that all prisoners are political prisoners, and acting on this recognition."

There exists within the majority of prisoners a revolutionary potential due to the material conditions that they exist under. This revolutionary potential cannot become kinetic without the proper tools, one of which is leadership. How do we know that revolutionary potential exists with the majority of prisoners? Because, there is a material foundation for it. What is the material foundation? We all know the axiom, "repression breeds resistance." Well, this is all the more true in prison. To state a simple absolute: human consciousness develops from without to within – i.e. from matter to mind, and not vice versa as some bourgeois oriented intellectuals tend to incorrectly think. Therefore the repression that exists against all prisoners exists "in its crude state, impetuous and compelling, in the consciousness and *in the lives* of the men and women who are imprisoned."

The prison population is a broad revolutionary movement waiting to occur.

Everyone should know by now that prison is politics, it is part of the imperialistic policy of exploitation, oppression and domination over the internal colonies. It is true, as Y.Y. Shanna points out, that not all resistance is revolutionary; some resistance is retarded and not directed in a revolutionary manner. But this small truth does not negate the bigger truth that the revolutionary potential exists with the broad majority of prisoners and can only be realized through a broad based prison leadership movement that focuses on and gives support to the broad base of prisoners, not just a selected few. The prison population is a broad revolutionary movement waiting to occur.

When organizing workers for a strike we do not organize a few workers to strike, but all of them. This brings us to a statement of Y.Y. Shanna's that "the relations between imprisoned Afrikans, and imprisoned nationals of other oppressed nations, the nationals of the oppressor nation, are the same as those which exist outside."

I beg to dissent. On the outside members of the oppressor nations are a labor aristocracy, they are not forced to live with us under the same conditions as us. However, in prison they are forced to live with us, under the same conditions as us. Take for example various prison rebellions such as Lucasville, where the fascists and Muslims united to put forward the same demands, quite the contrary on the outside. Have fascists united with Farrakhan for the Million Man March? Have they given support or unified with the oppressed nationalities against the things such as Prop 187? Of course not! Why? Because the material relationships are different on the outside than they are on the inside, and material relationships matter. Therefore this only proves that prison politicizes and we can righteously call all prisoners political prisoners.

Let us take an example. When you have an electrical socket you will not know it has juice in it unless you test it, and in order to test it you need certain tools. As it exists the socket is potential energy, but it cannot be verified until it becomes kinetic energy. In order to realize this we must use testing tools such as an electrical tester, a metal object that is a conductor of electricity, or, if you are foolhardy, your tongue. When the fact that this socket has juice has been verified by these tools and actualized to the human senses it can no longer be called kinetic energy. So it is with prisoners, as stated earlier this potential does in actual fact exist but it can only become realized through genuine leadership. To just ignore and disregard the majority for the minority is incorrect. The revolution in Peru was not put on hold so they could develop a free Chairman Gonzalo movement. This would fall into individualism and subjectivity. This is not to say that leadership should be ignored, but that without the vast mobilization of the people both inside and outside the prison system leadership loses its meaning for existence.

By recognizing that all prisoners are political prisoners due to the existence of the material basis for this conclusion we will be more efficient in pumping life into the revolutionary movement. The experiment of mobilizing all those prisoners who can be mobilized can only benefit the revolutionary struggle and cause its advancement. The struggle must continue no matter where one finds themselves upon bourgeois-dominated soil. Let us dispense with the bourgeois notion that deals with a selected few individuals and instead deal with the revolutionary practice of mobilizing all prisoners against U.S. imperialism.

DEATH AND DESTRUCTION TO THE U.S. EMPIRE!

BIRTH AND CONSTRUCTION TO THE PRISON REVOLUTIONARY MOVEMENT!

Notes:

1. George Jackson, *Blood in my Eye*, p. 85.
2. "Toward clarity on CCs, PPs and POWs," by Y. Y. Shanna.
3. *Reader in Marxist Philosophy*, Howard Selsam & and Harry Martel, eds., p. 321-322.
4. See MIM Theory 7, "Proletarian Feminist Revolutionary Nationalism on the Communist Road."
5. MIM Theory 7, p. 42.

Control Units: Technology That Tortures

Reprinted from MIM Notes 83, December 1993.

At the end of October [1993], 300 protesters gathered to further the campaign opposing the proliferation of Supermaximum Control Units. They targeted Amerika's newest and most advanced unit in Florence, Colo. which is rescheduled to open in the Spring of 1994. The Bureau of Prisons (BOP) intends to transfer the most politically conscious prisoners and those that have filed lawsuits exposing torturous conditions to Florence.

State increases technology for torture

Amerika increasingly advances the technology of repression and torture. Control Units isolate the prisoner for 23 hours a day in an 8-by-10 cell where the only human contact is with the three pigs that shackle and drag the prisoner to the exercise cage. Strip status in 50 degree cells, limited access to reading and writing materials, rare visitor privileges are normal torture tactics for the pigs. The new Florence prison has perfected and added to this system of repression. There, automatic solid steel doors, cameras and loudspeakers increase sensory deprivation and make communication between prisoners impossible.(1)

The Florence federal prison is modeled after the Pelican Bay Security Housing Unit (SHU) in California. There, 2,500 prisoners have filed a class action suit against the Department of Corrections (DOC) for using excessive force, failing to provide adequate medical treatment, and deliberately using isolation conditions that are cruel and dehumanizing, among other violations.(2)

The Florence Supermax is also sited near the Cotter Uranium Corp., a Superfund site that has a class action lawsuit pending because of the contamination in the area.(3) Erica Thompson, an attorney for the People's Law Office in Chicago and a member of the Committee to End the Marion Lockdown (CEML), told MIM that Control Units, now in 36 states, have a trend of being located next to Superfund sites because there is no other use for the land and there is not enough support for prisoners for their health to be considered.

Control units fight "revolutionary attitudes"

A lawyer for the prisoners said that the DOC has turned the Control Units into a tool for prisoners to wage war amongst themselves because the only way out is to snitch to the pigs. The SHU officials say that the threat of confinement has helped them to dismember gangs such as Nuestra Familia, the Black Guerrilla Family, and the Aryan Brotherhood.(2)

A former warden of Marion said, "the purpose of the Marion Control Unit is to control revolutionary attitudes in the prison system and the society at large."(3) Thompson said that the prisoners – mostly from Marion, Amerika's original permanent lockdown dungeon – are currently being transferred between prisons awaiting confinement at Florence.

The law allows inmates to be segregated for disciplinary problems and requires a hearing if the transfer is a punitive measure. However, the warden can order transfers without a hearing if it is an administrative measure – the tactic used to control political organization.

The pigs can ignore their due process procedure under the pretense that the transfer and isolation of a specific prisoner will make it safer for the general population. For example, when wimmin at the federal Lexington facility refused to return to their cells in protest of continuous racial and sexual harassment, administrative transfers were used to send the 12 perceived leaders to Marianna prison, the highest level security torture chamber for wimmin in Amerika.(1)

The BOP claims there is a need for more Control Units because the isolation allows less restrictive conditions and enables rehabilitation in the general prison population. The CEML points to the Westville, Ind. Supermax as more proof that the BOP lies. In prisons close to Westville, record long lockdowns have occurred to control the prisoners protesting the inhumane conditions at the Supermax. Waples, the Indiana Civil Liberties Union attorney, said, "the correction department violates state law in the method used to assign inmates to Supermax, and violates inmates' constitutional rights in the way it treats them once they're there."(4)

The beatings and torture at Westville forced the prisoners there to stage two major hunger strikes.(5) This pressure resulted in the resignation of James Aiken, Commissioner of the Indiana DOC. The prisoners filed a lawsuit because the "segregation tortures prisoners by depriving them of the basic necessities of human existence."(1) The lawsuit seeks an injunction against assignments to the Supermax until the department devises new guidelines.

Public opinion through protests

The CEML was founded in 1985 to monitor and oppose the brutal conditions of Marion, to fight against the proliferation of Supermax prisons, and to publicly expose the racist nature of these prisons.(6)

The CEML demands that the Congressional subcommittee that oversees the BOP hold hearings on the future of Florence. Two years after Marion opened, such hearings showed that 80% of the prisoners did not have the security rating appropriate for them to be incarcerated there.(3) The subcommittee members that received the CEML's demands and accounts of human rights violations have ignored the situation entirely.

Another goal is to stop the construction of the Supermax in Jackson County, Ill. Tamms – a desolate and economically depressed area – got the bid two weeks ago. The advocates promised jobs, but the CEML argues that all positions at the proposed Supermax will be filled by the present DOC personnel.(6) Thompson said that they will try for a legislative veto. She said that will be nearly impossible, but the legislative process is mostly for publicity and education.

Amerika justifies the proliferation of Control Units across the country with the myth of incarcerating the "worst of the worst."(7) The targets of the concentration camps are transferred because of their political beliefs and most Control Units are 85% black.(3) The Supermax Units serve the interests of the capitalist class and the only way to stop the massive torture is to build a vanguard party inside and the outside the walls of the prison system. The genocidal fanatics do not stop when we protest, they do not stop when we petition, they do not stop when prisoners die, they must be stopped by stripping them of control!

[The Florence dungeon has since opened for "business" —ed.]

Notes:
1. Walkin' Steel Fall 1992.
2. The Bay Guardian 9/23/92 p. 26.
3. Walkin' Steel Fall 1993.
4. The Indianapolis Star 5/2/92.
5. Southbend Tribune 7/12/92. For more information see MIM Notes 59.
6. Letter from CEML to Jackson County Board 9/3/93.
7. Journal of Prisoners on Prisons, Vol.4, No.2, 1993, p.10.

Modern Slavery: In Full Effect

by Prince Zakia

Over the last decade, government and prison officials nationwide have intensified their campaign to criminalize Blacks and Hispanics, while slowly establishing and solidifying code words and phrases which will be used, and are being used, to further perpetuate this state of modern slavery.

The rationale may be to make society safe, under the guise of the right wing's law and order, but the de facto truth is the enslavement of a race and nation of people. Rehabilitation is a code word for turning young Black men into old men before they are released from prison, if ever. It is a diabolical scheme that is well disguised, but nevertheless a grand and wicked conspiracy. It will not come as a surprise to learn that prisons are the number one growth industry in this country, a lucrative business, reminiscent of the days past when our beloved ancestors were held in chattel slavery. I contend that the crime bill and imprisonment of New Afrikans is no more than the process of legally perpetrating slavery backed by the United States Constitution. The 13th Amendment states: "Neither slavery now involuntary servitude, *except as punishment for crime* whereof the party shall have been duly convicted, shall exist within the United States..."

This same surreptitious process was witnessed by our sister Sojourner Truth as she struggled to establish reparations for those who had built this country. After the abolishment of slavery the United States set out to re-enslave Blacks by refusing to give them land or any means of self-support after releasing them from the plantations, causing many to participate in unscrupulous activity as they were systematically imprisoned, just as they are doing it today. We are faced with the same forced labor and the same brutal treatment given the chattel slave. It is now given to those prisoners who demand fair treatment and just-us.

The prison guard, the street kop, the FBI, judges, Congress, from the Big House to the White House are all vicious players in this complex conspiracy and billions have been earmarked to keep the "modern slave" imprisoned. And understand that none of the monies are for vocational or educational programs. Like our ancestors who were not allowed to read or write, we must be kept ignorant because they realize that education is knowing and knowing is the beginning of freedom.

There are presently more than one million people locked behind these plantation walls, "duly convicted." In essence there are more than a million *slaves*. The entire prison-plantation is overcrowded. But so were the slave ships, and that didn't stop the haul.

More and more white overseers are being hired who are equipped with the sadistic mentalities and licentious demeanor, to keep the prison-plantation running smoothly and trouble-free. They organize like a paramilitary militia, composed of racist whites armed with all of the slave-controlling apparatus: guns, nightsticks, shackles, mace, full riot gear protection, which can be used on the slave at the pleasure of the overseer.

Because of the racism that bubbles from beneath the surface of this nation's psyche, the whole criminal network — kops, kourts, the executive and legislative — will remain wicked. And they will do anything to the modern slave to keep them stigmatized, desocialized and brainwashed into believing they are inferior so as to keep them "penally" subservient.

We have to unite against this attack (war) upon us. We are limited in our choice of weapons, but universal law dictates that a closed-fist, symbolic of "unity," is stronger than an open hand symbolic of division. We must struggle to understand the necessity of a united front.

Criminal Justice as Social Control

[This article appeared in a RAIL pamphlet against the prison system. —ed.]

Amerika is under a repressive dictatorship. A dictatorship of the bourgeoisie, and this rule is defended by its criminal justice system. More than one million human beings languish in Amerika's gulags. For one-in-three young Black men, Amerikan freedom and democracy means prison, parole or probation.(1) That's seven-times the rate for white men.(2) Five years ago, only 1 in 4 Black men were under judicial supervision.(1) Combining prisons and jails, there are 1.3 million people behind bars in the U.S.(3)

Prisons are a tool of social control for the ruling class. In an imperialist society, prisons implement the reality of national oppression.

Prisoners whose letters appear in MIM Notes each month describe conditions in state and federal prisons as growing ever-more intense and brutal. The creation of prisons as places designed to break people's will to resist, to think, and to live is the most compelling testament to the role of prison as a means of extermination.

Prisons have two main purposes. First they take dissenting groups or individual dissenters out of circulation. Secondly, prisons serve to break up existing structures, be they communities, families, or organizations. As a matter of policy, the bourgeois dictatorship uses it's tools, including prisons, to further expand power differences between groups.

Critics of MIM are quick to say "but it's not 'dissenters' that are punished, it's 'criminals.'" What these critics don't realize is that criminality itself is a political term defined by the bourgeoisie to control oppressed groups. As a bourgeois system, the courts cloak this role by claiming to only defend the law, as if this was a neutral process without class- and nation-based biases. The very definition of crime has been defined by this bourgeois society to ensure that their genocidal crimes against humanity are rewarded and that the oppressed are punished for existing, let alone resisting.

There are no laws which say Blacks and Latinos should be executed more often or that execution is necessary for the murder or rape of a white person. But that's what makes bourgeois society so sinister; it defines "crime" and "justice" in a way which ensures that the desired effect of bolstering white nationalism is achieved.

Prisons don't stop crime.

The common conception is that the increase in the number of prisons is related to an increase in crime and that more prisons will stop crime. However, the statistics of the U.S. government tell a different story. Crime, as it is conceived of by the U.S. (in)justice system has two measures: the Uniform Crime Report (UCR) and the National Crime Survey (NCS). The UCR can be thought of as the compiled log of all crimes that get reported to the police while the NCS is best understood as the statistical representation of the crime rate that includes unreported crimes.

It is important to understand two things about these statistical measures of crime. First, both surveys indicate criminal activity as it is defined by the U.S. government and the states: murder is a definitive crime, while domestic violence is more nebulous. Second, both statistics are skewed upwards by the legal system as a whole in order to legitimate their activities. Nevertheless, these indicators show violent crimes as decreasing in frequency since 1972 or staying relatively the same.(2) While socially defined criminal activity has remained relatively the same since the 1970s, the rate at which the "justice system" has been funded has not, it has gone up 600% in the past 20 years.(2)

Big changes since 1972

The prison system of the United States of Amerika has well over 1,300,000 people locked up and approximately 3,000,000 additional people under its control through probation and other forms of non-prison incarceration. The rate of incarceration for black men in Amerika is seven-times that of white men, and men and wimmin of Latino and First nations are incarcerated at similarly high rates. U.S. incarceration has gone from being a "normal" tool of social control in a capitalist country to the bloated cancer of national oppression that it is today.

In 1972 the rate of imprisonment was around 100 per 100,000. Pretty much the same as it had been since 1925 when these sorts of statistics began to be compiled. Since 1972, however, the incarceration rate has climbed to 455 per 100,000 in 1990. Compare that with 46 in the Netherlands and 79 in Australia.

Tool of social control, tool of terror

The prison system and the police as a whole began to receive a marked increase in their funding in the early 1970s. These increases occurred in the immediate wake of massive urban rioting and the FBI sponsored terror campaigns against oppressed nation revolutionary groups such as the Black Panther Party.

For example, Frank Rizzo, the notorious Mayor of Philadelphia who presided over the 1978 assault on the MOVE house, was police commissioner of Philadelphia during the early 1970s. His work creating SWAT-like teams in the police force, and the successful integration of automatic weapons, personal transport and anti-urban insurrection tactics won him the praise of President Nixon as a "model commissioner". This qualitative change in the nature of urban police marked the beginning of an upward spiral of urban cops into a military

occupying force in Amerikan cities.

With an end to official segregation and rampant Klan terror, the police had to step in to keep the oppressed nations down. Civil rights underwent legal transformation, ending legal segregation, while white-flight from the city areas increased real segregation. While lunch counters might be legally integrated, many city areas don't have any whites to eat at them, and many suburbs don't have any oppressed nationals.

The "end" of Amerika's segregation apartheid and the rise of the civil-rights discourse meant that the notions of racial purity/superiority which had legitimated these systems of oppression had to be de-emphasized. In the same way, the Klan, which also functioned as an ever present threat to keep rural Blacks and other oppressed nationals "in their place," could not be employed in urban areas where the oppressed nationals were concentrated. The inner-cities have been transformed into minimum security prisons, warehousing a readily accessible reserve army of labor.

Amerika needed to come up with a new form of social control as well as a new theory for legitimizing its exercise. The legal prison system was Amerikkka's answer. The bourgeoisie in the media and the government helped to define oppressed nationals as the criminal element. Using the legal system, as opposed to the extra-legal/Klan, as the principle vehicle of social control is the perfect response to the growth in civil liberties consciousness because within this paradigm the "criminal" forfeits those rights through his or her activity. Consequently, the charge of racism in the "objective criminal justice system" is far murkier than charging the Klan with racism.

While the Klan could kill and terrorize, the police have the additional option of entering their victims into the criminal justice system in order to maintain white-nation hegemony. Cops can and do use extra-judicial force, but they also have other means not available to the Klan: long term incarceration with the endorsement of the legal system.

The part of the white nation that is uncomfortable with an ideology of racial supremacy has readily accepted prisons as a way of controlling oppressed nationals. This has been going on since slavery with the myths of the super-macho black man that rapes white wimmin. Half a million Blacks are in prison, but the effects of this incarceration run much deeper than 500,000. With one-third of young Black men under some form of judicial supervision (prison, parole or probation) at any one time, it's important to recognize that even more may be shuffled through this system before they reach the age of 29.

This cycling of a significant portion of the oppressed national population through the prison system has many deleterious effect on the development of these nations' community and national economies. Thus while civil liberties may be seen as having succeeded in changing the nature of white nation oppression over its internal colonies (desegregation), it did not change the fact that these nations are still "kept in their place."

Oppose the anti-crime hysteria

The prison system is not designed to counter crime or drugs; rather it concerns itself with maintaining the oppressive capitalist system. This is done through selective application of arbitrarily defined notions of criminality. For example, the bourgeoisie defines possessing a small amount of crack to be a crime, but it's business as usual for the CIA to bring in coke by the ton. Oppressed national areas are the ones who come under the most frequent surveillance for drugs, so it's no surprise that many more oppressed nationals are arrested than whites, proportionally.

And when whites are arrested for small amounts of crack possession the "just-us" system is quick to give them shorter sentences. This clearly exposes that the cops and the laws have nothing to do with stopping crime and everything to do with stopping the oppressed.

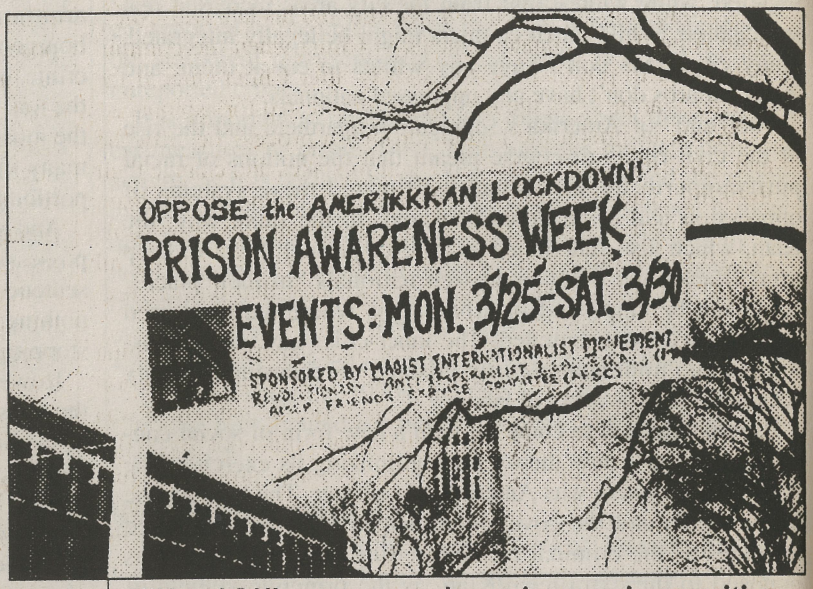
However, in order to support greater and greater repression, the cops and politicians occasionally need to fan the flames of settler anti-crime hysteria. We must always resist the attacks of the state, and when the politicians take the largest leaps from reality, such as arguing that more prisons are needed to stop crime, we must intervene and attempt to split chunks of settlers from the lynch mob. (Welfare and immigration are common places to find white national delusions, too.)

For example, it's a proven fact that building more prisons and arresting more people doesn't affect the crime rate. Since the settlers think that what they want to stop is "crime" even though it's actually deporting the oppressed from the locality, we can sometimes take some of the steam out of white national hysteria with an interjection of reality. Simply put, parts of the labor aristocracy can be split from the pro-cop, pro-prison movement for reasons other than proletarian ones, such as the fact that more cops and prisons could mean higher taxes. If wings of the labor aristocracy and bourgeoisie are too cheap to subsidize half of North America to lock the other half up, then that group can be a tactical ally in the struggle against national oppression. Similar arguments can be made about immigrants, where we can have a tactical alliance against Proposition 187-type measures with the internationalist minded bourgeoisie that hires illegal immigrants.

Notes:

1. 1995 Sentencing Project Report via Associated Press in Massachusetts Daily Collegian 10/5/95, p. 2.
2. Walkin' Steel, Spring 1994, p. 1. Committee to End the Marion Lockdown PO Box 578172, Chicago IL 60657-8172.
3. The Sentencing Project, "Americans Behind Bars: The International Use of Incarceration, 1992-1993." 918 F St. NW, Suite 501, Washington DC 20004.

Prison Awareness Week in Ann Arbor


OPPOSE the AMERIKKKAN LOCKDOWN!
PRISON AWARENESS WEEK
EVENTS: MON. 3/25-SAT. 3/30
SPONSORED BY: MAOIST INTERNATIONALIST MOVEMENT

MIM and RAIL events spread consciousness in opposition to the prison craze.

In March 1996, MIM and RAIL held prisons awareness week on the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor campus. The week of events covered various topics including the prison system in China under Mao, a talk about specific cases of police brutality on the Eastern Michigan University campus and a talk and discussion by MIM on why all prisoners are political prisoners in Amerikkka. The common thread in this work was MIM's view that prisons are tools to maintain and increase national oppression.

MIM organizes such events to educate the masses on the oppressive role and nature of prisons in our society and to build public opinion for prisoner struggles. Prisons are one of the most vivid applications of the principal contradiction within U.S. borders: the contradiction between imperialism and the oppressed nations.

The criminal injustice system is designed to target specific groups, principally oppressed nationals and also poor people in general. Blacks and Latinos are harassed by the pigs, oppressed national youth are suspected of gang activity because of their national identity and all oppressed nationals who are caught by the Amerikkkan garrison are subject to a court system that serves white nation interests. And the white nation has an interest in locking up oppressed people, whose potential organization is a constant threat to parasitism. The prison system also serves as a labor supply for some industries, and as a mechanism for controlling the reserve army of labor, especially from oppressed nations. Prisoners do not have free access to print or broadcast media; that is why it is so important for people on the outside to organize and agitate on behalf of prisoners, keeping in mind the larger goal of ending the criminal injustice system as we know it.

MIM recognizes that organizing around prison issues by itself can never abolish prisons and the oppressive role they play. But they are an important topic to educate people about and organize around. This work on the outside of prisons is a crucial balance to the work MIM facilitates in prisons, building revolutionary consciousness and increasing public support for Maoism.

Prison work allies

MIM can achieve unity with individuals and organizations that share a view of prisons as repressive institutions, too many in number, that systematically attempt to deny prisoners their humanity. There are many allies in this struggle who might not agree with MIM that the best way to abolish prisoner oppression is to organize a vanguard party to seize state power. But at this stage, unity on prisons is adequate for organizing a series of events.

The American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) co-sponsored prisons awareness week with MIM and RAIL. As a Quaker organization, their ideas about the best way to bring about social change obviously differ from MIM's. Yet they were able to recognize that at this stage it is more important to unite all who can be united against the common enemy then to refuse involvement based on a disagreement that has no practical application at this stage in this limited context.

On the other hand, many student organizations refused MIM's offer to co-sponsor the week. Some said they are not political. But what they don't realize is that not wanting to be political is a political line, support for the status quo. Another organization said they didn't want to be associated with communists. If these individuals and mass organizations agree with MIM's line on prisons but just don't want to co-sponsor educational events with us based on how it might look to other people, then they are opportunists. Their decision indicates that they are less concerned with advancing the political struggle then they are with their "image," irrespective of the political line behind that image.

MIM also applied for funding from many departments at the University specifically to pay for Dr. Allyn Rickett's visit. We were turned down by all of them, with some never bothering to respond to our request. But MIM did bring Dr. Rickett to speak and his lecture was an important addition to the analy-

sis of conditions in North America.

Dr. Rickett opened PAW with a talk on his experience in a communist prison in China from 1951-1955. His point was to provide an example of how prisons can reform people as opposed to punishing them. Dr. Rickett and his late wife Adele were Amerikan graduate students in China when the communists came to power in 1949. Shortly after China entered the Korean War in 1950, the Ricketts were arrested for espionage.

While in prison they went through a process of criticism and self-criticism to understand their mistakes and change their thinking. The schedule for all prisoners included criticism, self-criticism and study. Prisoners were essentially responsible for reforming themselves and reforming each other. Though all the prisoners had committed serious crimes, that did not prevent them from seeing the weaknesses in one another.

The Ricketts wrote a book about their experience in China called *Prisoners of Liberation*. This is an excellent explanation about the process of criticism and self-criticism and how it was successfully implemented. MIM distributes this book for $10.

A socialist revolution will eventually make proletarian justice in Amerika a reality, but Dr. Rickett agrees with us that it is not possible to implement such a system in prisons in the United Snakes. There is no way to reform prisoners to re-enter a society that never had a place for them in the first place. Rickett stressed that a person's conditions were a decisive factor in whether they could maintain their new way of thinking and acting, which means they need a social environment that supports positive change. Under conditions of national oppression in Amerika, so-called crime and recidivism will never be solved, no matter how many people the state locks up. Criticism and self-criticism are nevertheless important processes for revolutionaries, because the system of democratic centralism allows us to create the support system for rectification. As within any controlled community, relatively small-scale change is possible but does not in itself imply social change. Therefore, we use this example of China's prison system to illustrate the need for revolution and the potential for a better society, and as a model for reform within the Maoist party.

One night, MIM and RAIL showed a 20/20 clip called "Johnny-D," about a Black man in Alabama who was framed for murder and sentenced to death. MIM then led a discussion on why all prisoners are political prisoners. One audience member who has been active with Puerto Rican independence fighters in Amerika's prisons objected to this. S/he argued that calling all prisoners political prisoners denies legitimacy to prisoners who were captured specifically for their revolutionary activities.

MIM does work with prisoners captured for political activity. But we struggle to take the struggle beyond a few prisoners by defining Amerikan occupation of ghettos, barrios and First Nation land as a war on the internal colonies. MIM asks: If only prisoners captured for political activity on the outside are political prisoners, what about jailhouse lawyers who are put in control units for their activity? What about people imprisoned for killing cops in their neighborhoods in retaliation for pig murders in their communities? We fight for justice for prisoners because they are being held captive by an illegitimate government that oppresses their nations — recognizing this fact, calling some prisoners "political" and some not serves no purpose. (See the accompanying article for more on this question.)

Investigating the prison system in the United Snakes is an easy way to be convinced of the need for Black and Latino national liberation. The question of what MIM proposes as an alternative to the current system is answered in part by looking into the Rickett's experience in China. But we don't just dogmatically talk about this experience in China without proposing a way to implement it. We use China as an example of a system used under socialism. The principal battle now is still the struggle for national liberation. And since prisons are an integral part of how national oppression is maintained, they are a necessary target of agitation and action in the larger struggle for socialism and liberation for all oppressed nations.

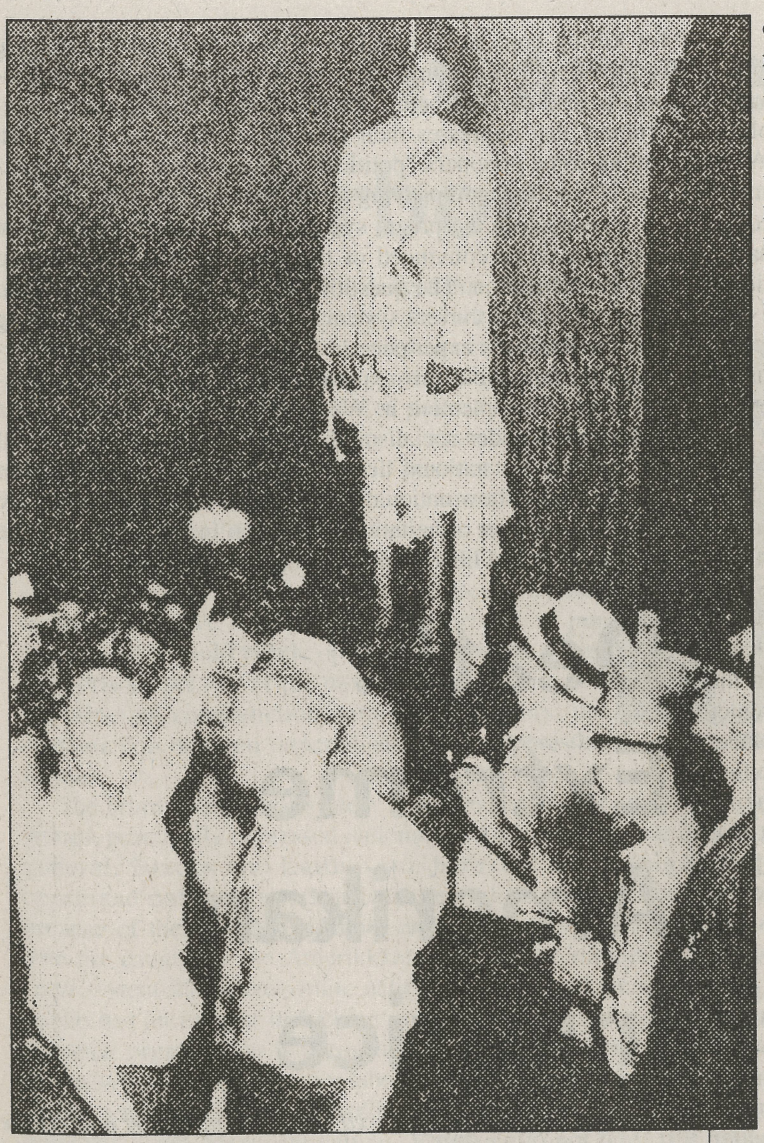
Death: Extreme Amerikan Injustice

[This article appeared in a RAIL pamphlet against the prison system. —ed.]

The death penalty shares with control units the designation as the most extreme form of punishment that the criminal "justice" system has to offer. As the pinnacle of repression, these two practices clearly expose the nationally oppressive character of Amerikan law and order. The death penalty is a symbolic act demanded by the capitalist state to publicly kill some of those whose existence threaten order.

In addition, the issue of the death penalty affirms group loyalty of the settler class and marginalizes "unpatriotic" liberals. Its extreme cruelty and lack of connection to stopping so-called crime shows that the death penalty is all about punishment of oppressed nationals and not about making a better society. While control units attempt to break the wills of oppressed nationals, the death penalty rallies the settler masses to higher levels of class solidarity.

The death penalty has been proven a failure at deterring "crime," despite the attempts of reactionary researchers to



LEGAL LYNCHING: Since 1930, 89% of the 455 men executed for rape have been Black.

prove the contrary. In a 1976 ruling, the United States Supreme Court found no conclusive evidence that the death penalty deters violent crime, and may in fact increase violent crime, as was the case in New York from 1903-1963.(1) But 75% of white Amerikans support it anyway.(2) Some advance the liberal line that Amerikans just don't have adequate information. But that's not it. The death penalty, like the rest of the criminal justice system, has nothing to do with stopping so-called crime, but everything to do with stopping the oppressed nations.

Amerika's long history of extrajudicial lynching aside, the death penalty is only applied after a long legal process: not fair, but legal. At each stage – arrest, arraignment, conviction, sentencing and appeals including all of their sub steps – the criminal injustice system manages to further concentrate oppressed nationals and filter out whites. There are currently over 2200 people on death row in Amerika, and Blacks alone account for 54% of all legal executions since 1930.(3) Blacks are only 12% of the U.S. population.

The criminal injustice system deems crimes against whites by oppressed nations a higher priority in arraignments, prosecutions and seeking and applying the death penalty than if the victim is non-white. In Texas, Blacks who kill whites are six times more likely to receive the death sentence than if the victim is Black. In Florida, Black offenders who are accused of killing whites are 40 times more likely than whites who kill Blacks to end up on death row.(1)

While the television news media makes a big deal out of relatively rare drive-by-shootings or cop killings, this pales in comparison to the starvation deaths of 14 million children each year.(5) The imperialists thrive on such oppression but aren't prosecuted, because the laws, from authorship to execution, are thoroughly in their own hands.

We can see the disparity between the laws in practice and the laws in books by looking at street crime. Are the laws enforced equally? No. Since 1930, 89% of the 455 men executed for rape have been Black.(6)

What makes the death penalty particularly sinister is the fact that it's irreversible. Great Britain abolished the death penalty in 1969 when it was discovered that two innocent people were executed.(1) In the United States, at least 50 people have been found innocent once put on death row. Some defenders of executions say to this "See, the system works, they got appeals!"

In these 50 cases, they were lucky. How many innocent people are killed and evidence of their innocence is never discovered? Sacco and Vanzetti were Italian immigrant anarchists framed and executed for murder in Boston in 1927. In the 1980s Massachusetts Governor Dukakis admitted that Sacco and Vanzetti were innocent. In 1953, Julius and Ethel Rosenberg were accused and executed for espionage. The evidence is still pretty sketchy about Julius, but even the National Security Agency, with its stolen(!) Russian documents admits that Ethel Rosenberg was innocent.

It's only public knowledge that Sacco, Vanzetti and the Rosenbergs were framed because they were officially political and movements fought for them and their memory long after they were dead. Now, poor Blacks on death row don't have enough people and money to defend themselves on appeals, let alone for decades after they are executed.

AMERIKAN NATIONALISM DEMANDS VIOLENCE

Even by the state's own criteria of what one can do to one's enemies, the death penalty is often "cruel and unusual" punishment. There have been many cases of botched executions. For example, an inmate was tortured earlier this year when he was strapped to a table so tightly that the lethal injection was prevented from flowing into his veins because of blocked circula-

tion. Eventually the pigs realized this and loosened the straps and the person died. In addition, there have been cases where the first burst of electricity failed to kill, often because of poor procedure, and multiple bursts were required to kill, causing pain and suffering that technically doesn't exist in a "normal" execution.

Executions used to be public but the crowds proved unable to control themselves. This often led "to violence among the crowds and senseless tragedy for a few unfortunate victims. The last public execution in Amerika was on August 14, 1936 in Kentucky. Nearly 20,000 people showed up to watch the hanging death of Rainey Bethea, a Black man accused of raping a white woman"(8). Vendors sold lemonade and the saloons were opened. The crowd became an unruly rioting mass. The number of white people hurt in this incident led Kentucky to ban public hanging for rape offenders. Apparently Kentucky didn't trust it's white citizens to behave "civilly" and not hurt each other during barbaric executions of Black men.

Lynch mobs, like the death penalty today, served to rally the white settler class together. For the period from 1878 to 1898 alone anti-lynching activist Ida B. Wells estimated that 10,000 blacks were lynched. Lynchings continued although in slowly declining numbers until 1964.(9) Sixty years ago it was lemonade stands, now it's barbecue parties, or in the case of the planned execution of Mumia Abu-Jamal, "black-out" parties to preserve electricity for the actual execution.

Notes: 1. Amnesty International "The Death Penalty: Cruel and Inhuman Punishment" pamphlet.
2. Gallup, 1985, in Saga of Shame. Quixote Center. PO Box 5206 Hyattsville MD.
3. Saga of Shame, p. 2, 4-5.
5. Ruth Sivard, World Military and Health Expenditures 1987-8, p. 25.
6. Saga of Shame, p. 5
8. William J. Bowers, *Legal Homicide*, and *Guerillas In Tha Mist*
9. From *The African-American Encyclopedia*, Vol 4. p. 1000. Williams, Michael W., ed. 1993.

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"War on Crack" Against Blacks And Latinos

Reprinted from MIM Notes 102, July 1995.

Despite evidence that large numbers of whites use and sell crack cocaine, federal law enforcement in Southern California has waged its "war on crack" almost exclusively in the internal colonies, sentencing Blacks and Latinos to some of the harshest drug penalties in the United States. Prosecutors hammer Black and Latino defendants with 10-year mandatory federal sentences while whites prosecuted in state courts face a maximum 5-year sentence.

In the United States, whites account for more than 67% of people who have ever used crack (2.3 million out of 3.4 million total) and 53% of those who used crack in the last year (488,000 out of 906,000). But less than 4% of the defendants prosecuted in federal courts for crack-related offenses in 1994 were white. Whites accounted for 51% of crack users in the Los Angeles metro area, but not a single white has been convicted of a crack cocaine offense in Los Angeles federal courts since 1986, and only 4% of those prosecuted in state courts were white.

Federal lawyers deny that nation plays any role in prosecution patterns – but they openly admit that federal and local law enforcement agencies concentrate almost exclusively on minority communities. For example, 96% of those arrested during a 1989 anti-drug sweep of L.A. schools were minorities, because only minority schools were targeted. Whites charged with possessing enough crack to be prosecuted under federal laws are not referred for federal prosecution because they are not considered "big enough." They are considered to be middle-people while Blacks and Latinos are considered to be top dealers.

At the same time, Blacks and Latinos are regularly handed over to federal prosecutors for possessing similar amounts (or less) than amounts for which whites are only charged locally. In many cases, undercover agents make larger and larger demands on suspects they buy from – entrapping suspects into carrying amounts sufficient for federal prosecution.

Notes: Los Angeles Times, May 21, 1995.

Media Vilifies Sex Offenders

Boston Globe fuels Criminal Crusade

May 1996 saw unprecedented strides in the general movement toward repression of pig-defined sex offenders. For the whole of the United Snakes "Megan's Law" will mandate registration of large numbers of people. This law mandating registration of pig-identified sex offenders, notifying their neighbors, and making that information available publicly, has been the rule in New Jersey for a year and is now federal. In Massachusetts, the crusade to demonize this group has been overwhelming. Both his "liberal" opponent in the senatorial race, Senator Kerry, and the "liberal" Boston Globe accused hard-core right wing Governor Weld of being soft on pig-defined sex offenders.

This essay criticizes a series of three articles in the Boston Globe to illustrate a correct analysis of rape, including rape of children, and refocus the debate on criminal injustice.

RAPED AND RAPED AGAIN

All of this legislating and posturing will not stop the abuse of children, its purported goal. Children are highly sexualized in this society because power difference is eroticized. When children are powerless, they are sexy. This sexualization of children is obvious is pornography and general media representation. The scare-tactics in the Globe reinforce incorrect analyses of rape, including rape of children, catering to their pseudo-feminist constituency. This use of gender to beef up the police state is a trademark of pseudo-feminism. Pseudo-feminists make gender the principal contradiction and ignore the ramifications the legislation they advocate has for oppressed national minorities.

The first sensationalist story in Boston Globe campaign against sex offenders appeared on May 1. It told the tale of a man who had recently served a brief term for a sex offense who was accused of another, the rape of a 14-year-old girl. Never mind that he was not yet convicted, the Globe had already decided that he was guilty because he had a prior conviction. The bourgeoisie likes to pretend that the problem of child sexual abuse is one of deranged individuals destined for derangement their whole lives.

The neighbors of this man believed he was guilty because of the past convictions alone. They were also quick to absolve themselves of any cultural unity with him. One man said: "I had no idea he had a problem like that. I don't know what a man who did something like that is doing out."

There is a great hypocrisy in a society in which child sexual exploitation is constantly portrayed in both pornography and mainstream media but people feel so uncomfortable talking about it that they use euphemisms like, "a problem like that." If the problem were just naiveté, and the man really did not know that in practice Amerika sanctions child pornography and unquestioned parental control, that would not be hypocritical. But that is just an impossibility for anyone awake and alive walking down the streets of billboards. Those who uphold the system that protects speech for the powerful (including pornography) but decry the products of that speech cannot avoid hypocrisy.

The attack on pig-defined sex offenders avoids 99% of all child sexual oppression.

The man, a community leader, continued with his erroneous understanding saying: "We are very upset about the situation. I just want the tenants to know we're doing everything we can to make this a safe place to live."(1) News flash: the vast majority of children who are sexually abused are abused by their parents or other family members. The vast majority of them, especially those who are white, are never caught. If the man really wanted to make the place safe, he would have no choice but to work for the abolition of the patriarchal family and create real social responsibility for the care of children. Instead, he invents monsters to target and avoids 99% of child sexual oppression.

This push for more imprisonment actually destroys oppressed families, and MIM is not advocating abolishing the support networks among the oppressed that the imperialists are busy ripping apart. Long term, however, children won't be free until they grow up communally rather than in isolated families without social accountability.

The Boston Globe used this story to support its conclusion that we need registration of pig-identified sex offenders in Massachusetts. The director of the American Friends Service Committee Criminal Justice program, Jill Brotman, has pointed out that telling sensationalist stories of child molesters is a deceptive technique used to vilify all pig-identified sex offenders: "All these bills are sold as child molesters but the population affected is very heterogeneous."(2) That group includes men who have been convicted of soliciting prostitutes, raping their wives, or statutory rape just across the magic age line.

None of these are really the "threat to society" that the Globe says they are: these are conformist actions, in accord with patriarchal society. Additionally, not all of these groups

pose the same threat to wimmin and children, even assuming they are guilty as charged - a huge assumption in a criminal injustice system where money for a lawyer is the biggest factor in whether you'll be found "guilty." The issues are very distinct gender issues threatening different groups, though you would never know it from reading the Boston Globe.

The second pro-registration piece in the Globe came the next day, this time accusing Weld of letting sex offenders out of prison eventually.(3) The Globe whined that Weld's scathing indictments of those incarcerated for these crimes did not jive with the fact that a minority of them do get parole.

Weld has no grasp of the real situation, and so his statements don't mean much anyway. For example, he says: "There's quite a lot of evidence that the recidivism rate is so high for sex offenders, particularly child molesters, that you're almost better off concentrating on bars as the form of treatment."(3) According to the AFSC's Jill Brotman, however, the recidivism rate for those who participate in programs is just 15%, a very low rate relative to many other crimes.(2) We're not endorsing the programs here, only using generally accepted statistics to show that Weld is lying through his teeth, ignorant of the real goings-on in the prisons, making things up to suit his agenda.

Prison is not how to deal with all the people who follow the preachings of pornography and advertising.

Truth is, Weld (and the government) does not really care about decreasing recidivism. Crime is a big industry for Massachusetts and for Amerika. So Weld just resorts to criticizing programs on moralistic grounds: "Philosophically, I don't think treatment programs are terribly effective for sex offenders, particularly for sex offenses involving children. That's not where I'd put the bulk of my money if I had a limited amount of resources."(3) RAIL activists know this well: Weld would rather spend millions of dollars on transferring prisoners to Texas and building super-maximum prisons than on preventing crime, however defined.

The programs are not without their problems. They still focus on individual offenders rather than social reformation. It is wrong to expect people who are socialized into a rape culture to reform their own selves while society continues to eroticize power. MIM would go to those people who actually committed the crimes, urge them to engage in criticism-self-criticism to understand why gender is fucked up and their behavior is reflecting that, and organize them into un-fucking up gender.

Programs also have more tangible problems. Taking advantage of the programs dooms an individual to a life of registration and notification, thus a never-ending sentence. They must, to take the programs, sign a paper declaring that they are sex offenders and have a lifelong illness.(2)

There are very real penalties for failing to sign on when programs are available. One mother of a prisoner doing time for a sex offense he did not commit explained that her son cannot get parole because every time his case comes up he refuses to sign the paper declaring that he has this supposed disease.(4)

The bill in Massachusetts is ex post facto, meaning that it applies to people convicted before is was passed. That means that the school officials would be notified that children in their schools have a parent who was convicted of a sex crime or otherwise signed one of these papers to get parole 20 years ago.(2) The patriarchal bourgeoisie marks these people for life, never allowing any amount of reformation to release them from repression.

The third article by the Globe was more of the same: using the bogey-man of the child rapist to justify big-brother political ends.(5) A Democratic state representative out to get more support from patriarchs "was outraged" and complained: "I don't know of a more vicious crime than the rape of a child."(5)

Jill Brotman pointed out, and MIM and RAIL have long maintained, that this is a skewed understanding. She asks: "Is a pedophile more of a monster than someone who drops a bomb on Iraqi women and children?"(2) The political definition of crime prevents an objective ranking of monsters except by material analysis, which makes Amerikan imperialism the biggest rapist, child molester, murderer, and what have you.(6)

As the society portrays children in an increasingly sexualized and violent way, their abuse will continue to be endemic. But following the reactionary tide toward the bogey-man stranger child-molester, and away from the far more dangerous family, would be a great disservice to children. Instead, when reactionaries harp about child molesters we must get the debate about prisons back on track and insist on looking at the larger issues of incarceration. Prison is not the way to deal with the huge number of people following the preachings of pornography and advertising, with the overall approval of society.(7)

Notes:

1. Boston Globe, May 1, 1996, p. 19.
2. Jill Brotman, director of the Criminal Justice Program at the American Friends Service Committee, May 22, 1996.
3. Boston Globe, May 2, 1996, p. 1.
4. Anonymous mother of a prisoner, speaking at the Coalition of Prisoner Families on May 22, 1996.
5. Boston Globe, May 3, 1996.
6. See the RAIL Prison Pamphlet, available for a dollar from RAIL PO Box 3576 Ann Arbor MI 48106.
7. See "The Oppression of Children Under Patriarchy" in MIM Theory 9, "Psychology and Imperialism," available from MIM for $4.95.

Real Criminals

by A New York Prisoner

Let us start with the fact that if the same laws enforced by the U.S. empire upon its population were applied to the state, we would find them *currently* guilty of robbery, murder, extortion, unlawful imprisonment (i.e. the holding hostage of entire nations), assault with deadly weapons, possession and sale of controlled substances, kidnapping, etc. The list goes on but you get the picture: the U.S. empire is according to their own law an illegal government in direct violation of the Racketeering Influenced Corrupt Organizations (RICO) Act.

Law is the political, economic and social domination of one class/nation over another class/nation. The "law" is manifested and exercised through state institutions such as courts, local police, alphabet police (FBI, CIA, IRS, BATF) and backed by political branches such as the legislative, judicial and executive. These institutions enforce the ruling class/nation's will by violence in order to fortify their domination and market. So let's remember that society is whipped in line by violence and the constant threat of violence.

Crime is a term used to describe actions that defeat the ruling class/nation's power. Essentially, the labeling of murder, extortion, robbery and other acts as crime has nothing to do with the act per se, if this were the case all of Amerika would be "criminals" acting in concert, for we have and continue to benefit from the armed robbery, murder, extortion, kidnapping and holding hostage entire nations that the U.S. empire commits on a daily basis. If I violate humanity via murder robbery, etc., in the name of the ruling power and I do a good job at it then I will be showered with praise and medals, but if I do it against their power then I will be showered with punishment, imprisonment, and humiliation. So we can see that the act per se is not criminal but who and what the act is against or for makes it a crime.

When a person is punished by the state with imprisonment for defying the economic repression, political domination and social control of those in power, that person is in all sense of the word a political prisoner. Just because a person/people is not consciously aware that they are in fact oppressed does not mean they aren't oppressed and just because a person/people are not consciously aware that they are political prisoners does not mean that they aren't political prisoners.

The defiant acts done in oppositions to the state's rule are due to class/national antagonistic contradictions. The law is enforced because these contradictions are irreconcilable under the current state of affairs, i.e. capitalism/imperialism, and in order for the U.S. empire to conduct their business of oppression and exploitation as usual "a power apparently standing above society becomes necessary, whose purpose is to moderate the conflict and keep it within the bounds of 'order,' and this power arising out of society but placing itself above it, and increasingly separating itself from it, is the state."(1)

No matter if you do or don't commit "crime" if you are a member of the nationally oppressed the pressure by the state will remain on you so you can realize that the violence places demands on you no matter what. We walk with prisons hovering above our heads. The state seems gigantic to us, 'cause we sitting on our asses. Let us rise.

Notes: Engels quoted by Lenin in *State and Revolution*.

Clinton's Sweatshop

Reprinted from MIM Notes 90, July 199

by MC234

On May 26 [1994], Bill Clinton announced that China's most-favored nation (MFN) trade status would be extended for another year.(1) Clinton also stated that China's "human rights" policies would no longer be a factor in qualifying for MFN. Previously, Clinton attempted to use his power over MFN to convince China to adopt liberal human rights policies.

MIM does not defend the current regime in China. Deng Xiaoping was part of the revisionist clique that seized power after the death of Mao in 1976 and arrested the so-called "Gang of Four." Certainly the fact that the Dengist regime exploits prisoners for profit is more evidence that China is not socialist. Yet we are eager to expose hypocrisy when we see it: The U.S. criticizes China for political repression and prison labor practices, but the U.S. does the same thing as China!

One need only look at the FBI harassment and eventual destruction of the Black Panther Party for Amerika's position on "dissent." The government interferes with non-revolutionary dissent as well, such as its surveillance and disruption of Central America solidarity groups in the 1980s.

As for prison labor, Amerika is guilty again. The prison pages of MIM Notes regularly feature articles about forced labor at slave wages (5) building death row facilities,(4) or as firefighters.(3) What MIM didn't know until recently is that U.S. prison labor is now in direct competition with Chinese forced labor. The California Department of Corrections (DOC) has a line of clothing being marketed in Asia in direct competition with its state capitalist opponent. The California prisoners are paid between 35 cents and $1 an hour.(2) "The 'Prison Blues' brand of clothes, made by prisoners in the Oregon DOC, boasts projected sales of over $1.2 million in export revenues."(2)

If anything, the Chinese revisionists are not as bad as the Amerikan state for using prison labor: China has announced a ban on the export of prisoner-made goods, whereas the U.S. is increasing such exports.(2)

Notes: 1. Reuters, 5/26/94. 2. Prison Legal News May 1994. 3. MIM Notes 89 6/94, p. 11. 4. MIM Notes 84 1/94, p. 11. 5. MIM Notes 75 4/93, p. 11.

Feds Step Up Surveillance

By MC12

The advance forces of the prison system are the surveillance and repression units that operation on the outside, among the "free" people of the united states. In the past few years the activities of these forces have increased markedly, encouraged by relaxed legal standards on citizen's "rights." This article details the expansion of "national security" investigations, and the expansion of federal surveillance for supposed criminal investigations.

FISA INVESTIGATIONS

The FBI is rapidly increasing its powers within U.S. borders, and devoting more and more resources to secret surveillance and investigations in the name of "national security." This year Congress beefed up the 1978 Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act (FISA), a 1978 law, which "permits secret buggings and wiretaps of individuals suspected of being agents of a hostile foreign government or international terrorist organization, even when the target is not suspected of committing any crime."(1)

The number of intelligence gathering or national-security wiretaps approved in 1994 was 576, which was more than the 554 approved for federal criminal cases. By 1995 the number of such FISA authorizations had jumped to 697. And the first three months of this year are running more than 20% ahead of last year's rate, which means the total this year would be around 830, for a total 44% increase over two years.

The rate of increase may further accelerate because this year Congress widened FISA to permit property searches instead of just electronic surveillance. Now, "anytime an FBI agent wants to enter a private home to conduct a national security investigation, he or she has to secure the permission of a court ... that ordinary citizens cannot visit, whose files cannot be publicly reviewed, and which presides in secret in a restricted area" of the Justice Department.(2) The secret court of judges in the Justice Department has received thousands of requests, and never ever rejected one.

In 1995 there were 2,000 FBI special agents assigned to foreign counterintelligence, spending more than $500 million. A lot of this is for alleged economic and industrial espionage, but the powers they have can be used for political purposes as well. Attorney General Janet Reno, whose appointment pleased pseudo-feminists everywhere, is the main leader of the buildup. A "major supporter of wiretapping and electronic surveillance," she signs every request for surveillance.(3)

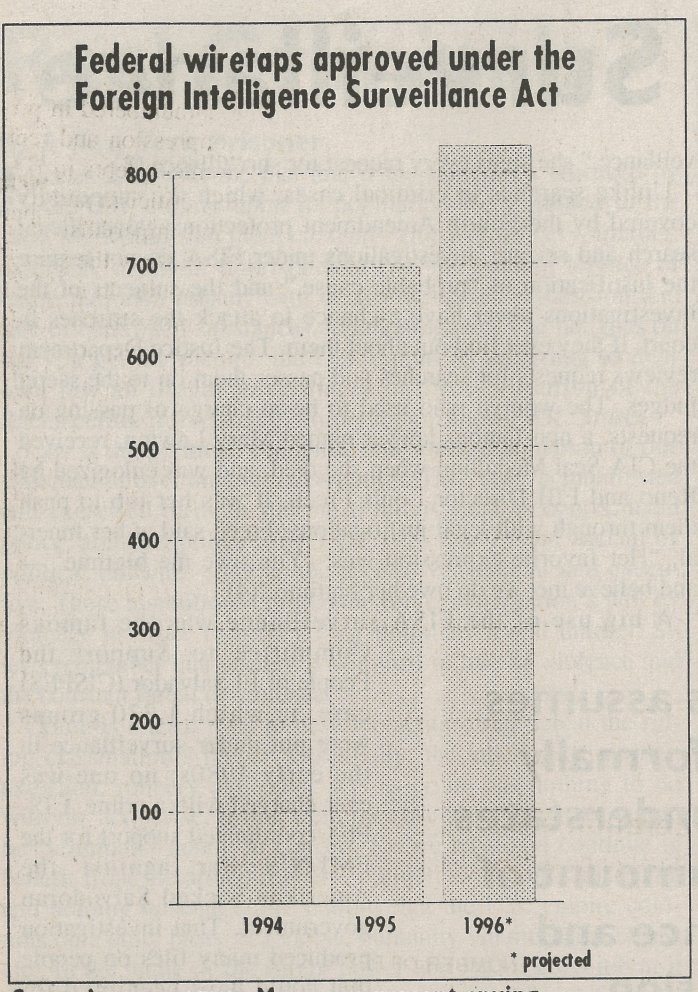
Unlike searches in criminal cases, which are supposedly covered by the Fourth Amendment protection against illegal search and seizure, investigations under FISA do not require the justification of "probable cause," and the subjects of the investigations never have a chance to attack the searches in court, if they ever find out about them. The Justice Department reviews requests for searches and passes them on to the secret judges. The womyn who used to be in charge of passing on requests, a non-famous lawyer named Mary Lawton, received the CIA Seal Medallion when she died, and was eulogized by Reno and FBI Director Louis Freeh. It was her job to push them through with legal justifications. Freeh said at her funeral, "Her favorite expression was: 'You owe me bigtime' — and believe me, we do owe her bigtime."(4)

MIM always assumes anything formally recognized understates the actual amount of surveillance and repression.

A big use of the FISA surveillance was the famous Committee to Support the People of El Salvador (CISPES) case, in which 1,330 groups were put under surveillance in the early 1980s; no one was ever charged with a crime. CISPES coordinated support for the FMLN's war against the Amerikan-backed Salvadoran government. That investigation produced many files on people that could have been used for anything, and still might be.

One of the first cases in which the FBI used the new property-search power, according to a recent Washington Post article, was after the subway gas attack in Japan. Within two days they had permission to break into the apartment of members of the Japanese religious group suspected of committing the attack, searching and bugging the apartment and tapping the phones. There was no evidence anyone there did anything wrong (and it had not been proved that the group in Japan was responsible), no probable cause, and the search turned up nothing — but they left the bugs behind.

Just because the FISA searches aren't covered by the Fourth Amendment doesn't mean the information they supposedly turn up can't be used in criminal cases. There have been more than 50 cases in which FISA evidence was used for criminal prosecutions, including the case of the man suspected of being a member of Abu Nidal who was allegedly tape-recorded as he killed his daughter. The tape was used in court in Missouri and he was sentenced to death in the case. The courts have said this use is fine as long as the "primary purpose" of the surveillance is a legitimate national security interest rather than a criminal case.



CLINTON'S CONTRIBUTION: More government spying

We highlight this story because it reveals a big part of the imperialist state's repressive apparatus. Anyone or any group can be categorized as "terrorist," a category that obviously includes all heroic resistance to imperialism, such as the people's wars in Peru or the Philippines. Even though these thousands of cases of "legal" surveillance are kept secret, MIM always assumes anything formally recognized understates the actual amount of surveillance and repression.

CRIMINAL SURVEILLANCE

Under the Clinton administration, the Washington Post has reported, federal forces' wiretapping and other forms of electronic surveillance for "criminal" cases have increased dramatically.(5) The expansion has been going on for years, but the rate of increase stepped up in the last few years.

Federal courts approved 340 requests for electronic surveillance in 1992, 672 in 1995, and almost definitely will approve more than 700 in 1996. That is all separate from the "national security" surveillance discussed above. Again, Janet Reno is the heaviest pusher of the expansion, made possible by big increases in funding. The FBI budget rose 53% from 1993 to 1996, and the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) is getting 33% more; both are pressing for even more.

For example, in the 1997 budget request, the Justice department is asking for 50 new FBI agents, 54 new DEA agents, and 91 new federal prosecutors – all for one investigation supposedly into Mexican drug importers (although the investigation will take place all over the country).

It's not cheap. The Post believes that "Federal wiretaps cost more than $70,000 a month to operate and generate hundreds of hours of labor for monitors, transcribers, surveillance teams and investigators" (that includes a lot of doughnuts on the expense account). To get around some of this expense, the DEA is spending $33 million to replace out-dated single-line tapping equipment with new technology to monitor 40 lines at once and process the data by computer. Further, the Post reports, "The FBI is plowing millions into developing new intercept techniques for digital lines and expanding its cadre of agents who use the bureau's high-tech surveillance gear."

Janet Reno bragged to the Senate in May 1996: "I don't think J. Edgar Hoover would contemplate what we can do today in terms of technology."

Cheaper than a full-blown wiretap, the Feds also use equipment to track the origin of call into a number, and the outgoing calls from the number, creating a record of associations. Many people, including people who aren't oppressed, are nervous about privacy intrusions by police. Recognizing this, FBI Director Louis J. Freeh wrote in a letter to the New York Times that he had "no intention to expand the number of wiretaps or the extent of wiretapping." But in a report to Congress just four months later, the FBI predicted electronic surveillance would be up 54% by 1998, and 130% by 2004.

The federal government now does more than half of the legal electronic surveillance for criminal investigations. States and local governments do almost as much as the Feds, but the federal practice is increasing much faster. These numbers are misleading however, as some point out, because they only count new wiretaps, not legal continuations of existing permissions. These extensions often involve permission to add new lines to a current wiretap order. There were 646 such extensions in 1992, and 861 in 1994.

Part of a course toward fascism is the increasing legitimacy of such anti-democratic forces. The legal process has no problem allowing this, and the mainstream political process welcomes increases in repression. For every act of repression the pigs admit to, revolutionaries know from experience that more is happening off the books.

Notes:

1. Washington Post Magazine, June 23, 1996, adopted from the forthcoming book Main Justice, by Jim McGee and Brian Duffy, Simon and Schuster, 1996. p. 10.
2. Ibid., p. 25.
3. Ibid., p. 12.
4. Ibid., p. 21.
5. Information on criminal wiretapping from the Washington Post, July 7, 1996, p. A1.

Book Exposes Injustice

***The Real War on Crime: The Report of the National Criminal Justice Commission.* Steven R. Donziger, ed. HarperPerennial: New York, 1996.**

Review by MC12

The National Criminal Justice Commission is a progressive though liberal group that produced this book to counter the pro-prisons, anti-"crime" mania sweeping Amerikan politics. The group includes some big names like law professor Derrick Bell, representatives of the NAACP and similar organizations from other oppressed nations.

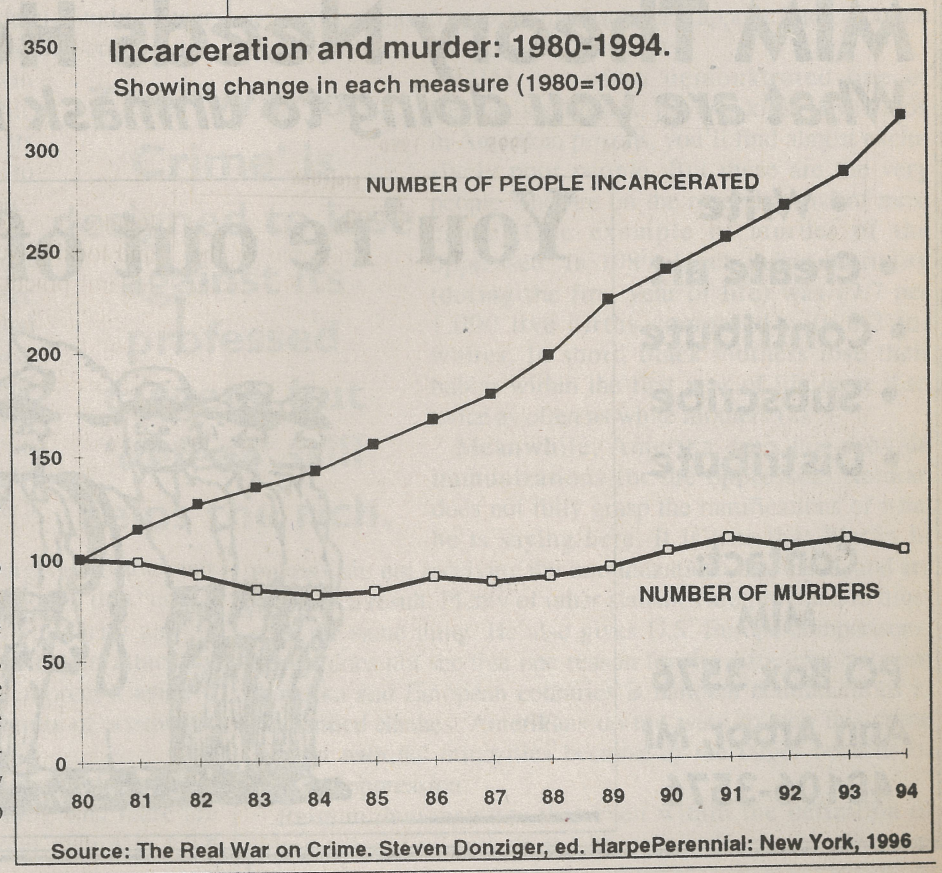
The great service of the book is its concise publication of lots of important and recent information that anti-prison activists need. All the facts in MIM's Amerikkkan Lockdown Index (published in this issue of MIM Theory and available at MIM's Internet Web site) are from this book. If you need references to show that more police do not lower "crime" rates, or the details of bias in application of the death penalty, and so on, it's all there in accessible form. So, as a useful reference, MIM recommends this book (although much of the best information from it is in our Index). On the other hand, the book shows the pitfalls of liberal thinking, even when applied to a progressive cause such as opposing the prison system.

First, the writers repeatedly stress that they think violent criminals do belong in prison, and their criticism is only of the unfairness of the system and the hundreds of thousands of non-violent offenders in prison. MIM agrees that there are some people who have committed crimes against the people for which they need to be held accountable, and they need to engage in extensive self-criticism and rectification. But much more important than that, for revolutionaries, is that the greatest criminals of all are not only not in prison – they run the government and economy! So given that fundamental fact of imperialism, MIM does not dwell on the need to lock up some of the people who happen to already be in prison. Suffice it to say that if the people came to power in North America, almost but not quite all of those people locked up in jail and prison would be released although some would have rectification to make; and some would stay behind bars until it was clear they no longer posed a threat to the people.

These people would undoubtedly be outnumbered in prison by imperialists and various agents of oppression and repression, who would themselves have bottomless debts to pay to the people. In fact, we could imagine self-criticism and rectification involving both street criminals and imperialist oppressors, in which street criminals were able to show the imperialists a thing or two to the benefit of both groups. In most cases we believe the street criminals would be more likely successfully engage in the work needed to join a socialist society than imperialists and other genuine oppressors; the latter group would find themselves opposed to the new system, while the former would be more interested in joining it.

Another major flaw with the book is its attempt to find better and worse ways for police and courts to reduce "crime," defined in the very narrow legal sense of the current system. They endorse "community policing," for example, and devote large sections of the book to "model" ways of reducing violence and "crime," such as alternative forms of sentencing. Some of these practices may be better for the oppressed than

Don't be fooled: Stopping "crime" isn't why they imprison millions. No improvements in the murder rate.



Source: The Real War on Crime. Steven Donziger, ed. HarpePerennial: New York, 1996

others, to be sure, but their emphasis is on reforming and saving a system that revolutionaries know is beyond such measures. With the very definitions of crime and violence controlled by the hegemonic bourgeoisie and its imperialist-system supporters, the very terms of the debate need to be overthrown before improvements can be made. Maoists may support some local practices as better than others, for example — and in some cases we actively work for reformist demands — but we only do so in the clear and explicit context of opposing the very system in which they operate.

The Commission produces a "Pathway to a Safer Society" with 11 recommendations. Some of these are progressive even though the motivation behind them are pro-capitalist. Good recommendations include a moratorium on building new prisons, and eliminating "racial and ethnic biases" in the system (uh-huh). Obviously either of these would be improvements.

On the other hand, reactionary recommendations include increasing economic efficiency of the criminal injustice system, developing broader anti-"crime" strategies combining all levels of government, reducing "poverty" (a goal MIM supports, but not for Amerikans at the expense of the victims of Amerikan imperialism, who are not mentioned), the collaboration of police and public health officials to reduce drug use problems, and so on. Without changing the terms of the debate, these proposals amount to developing greater levels of collaboration with the state for its repressive anti-"crime" ends – In other words movements toward fascism, even if in a less openly violent guise.

This book represents the better side of some liberalism – the ability to oppose state repression and blatant inequality imposed by the dominant groups in society. Readers of this book who like the analysis may very well be receptive to MIM's revolutionary arguments, especially when they hear the important criticisms of this type of political line. On the other hand, some supporters of this line will look at revolutionaries as "impractical," or as militants who want to replace one bad system with another – in other words, they may see MIM as raining on the liberal parade. These people are committed to the system and ultimately don't want to see it threatened.

Many progressives in North America, members of oppressed nations as well as some Amerikans, are coming to oppose the reign of prison terror here. MIM has been out front on this work for years, and we need to struggle with all revolutionaries and potential revolutionaries to make sure that such well-founded opposition leads to higher levels of struggle rather than sinking into the troughs of reformism.

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The Rich Get Richer & The Poor Get Prison

Ideology, Class, and Criminal Justice

JEFFREY REIMAN
ALLYN & BACON, BOSTON: 1995
(FOURTH EDITION)

review by MCB52

The 1995 edition of this 1978 classic has lots of handy statistics updated to demonstrate that the criminal injustice system does not exist to fight "crime," but to perpetuate the dominance of already powerful groups. The author, Jeffrey Reiman, is a social democrat who uses Marxist analysis in some interesting ways, without claiming to be a communist.

The central thesis of the book is that the Amerikan criminal justice system operates with a policy of "Pyrrhic defeat." This term is derived from the notion in the academic study of war of a "Pyrrhic victory," a victory in one battle that cripples the winning army to such a degree it cannot win the war. The "War on Crime" is a Pyrrhic defeat because it is designed to lose against its professed targets but it "yields such benefits to those in power that it amounts to a success."(1)

Although the book talks a lot about the economic structure of society and its use of force to protect the status quo, it is more interested in the superstructural role of criminal justice. It focuses more on the "ideological function" of criminal justice than on the "repressive function." That is fine as a compliment to materialist analysis of the structural inequality, and even the author does not uphold it as a substitute.

The 'War on Crime' is designed to lose against its professed targets, but 'defeat' still helps the rich.

Reiman leans on the social theory of bourgeois sociologists such as Emile Durkheim to talk about the function that "criminals" serve in creating a sense of social solidarity among everyone else. When a society rallies together in attacking those who have been defined as deviants, it enforces a sense of solidarity among them and charts out the limits of acceptable and unacceptable behavior in the society.

However, Reiman does not accept this notion of the function of crime wholesale. Durkheim did not realize that there are divisions in the society that make different members have divergent interests. Thus, as Reiman points out, the consensus about what behavior is acceptable and what is not is not pre-existing but is rather created in constant struggle of ideologies. The bourgeoisie gets to decide the ideology for the most part, and the criminal justice system it controls enforces that. Thus it creates a sense of solidarity for one part of society's solidarity — those in power.

In challenging the definition of crime and exposing it as not objective, Reiman statistically compares the harms due to occupational hazards and bad health care to those due to "crime." This is one illustration, but nowhere near as compelling as what he could of produced with an internationalist perspective. It is true that the laxity of enforcement of pollution restrictions causes injury and death to many people in the united states. But by focusing on this country, Reiman ignores both the unequal harm toward different nations of people and the shear scope of the harms inflicted. Pointing to corporate-inflicted hazards within U.S. borders without reference to the Third World could lead Amerikans to a not-in-my-back-yard approach to corporate crime, which harms the world's majority.

MIM has often demonstrated one of Reiman's subheads: poverty kills. If you look in Amerikan prisons, you'll find almost exclusively poor people. But these are the very people who are on the receiving end of most crime. One example of murder of the oppressed: In 1989, black infant mortality (during the first year of life) was 17.7 per 1,000 live births compared with 8.2 for whites. In short, black mothers lose their babies within the first year of life more than twice as often as white mothers.(2)

Meanwhile, Amerika does not provide immunizations for the oppressed. Reiman does not fully grasp the ramifications of what he is saying here. It is true that Blacks in poverty are not receiving the immunizations they need, and are dying as a result. Plenty of other statistics are provided to illustrate the same thing. He also gives U.S.-Europe comparisons, but he does not see that one reason for the difference between Amerika and European countries is national contradictions in the United Snakes. Amerikans do not want to stop this crime against national minorities because of the larger benefits of national oppression.

Reiman demonstrates that even within the definition of crime tailored to exclude the bourgeoisie's crimes, there are

further ways that the privileged are weeded out of prison.

> "*For the same criminal behavior*, the poor are more likely to be arrested; if arrested, they are more likely to be charged; if charged they are more likely to be convicted; if convicted they are more likely to be sentenced to prison; and if sentenced they are more likely to be given longer prison terms than members of the middle and upper classes."(3)

These charges are demonstrated statistically. For example, in the 1991 National Crime Victimization Survey, 28% of people victimized by violent crime perceived their assailants as Black. Meanwhile, 37.8% of those arrested for those crimes were Black. Even forgetting that people are more likely to go to the police about a Black assailant, Reiman calculates that pigs are going after Blacks 30% more frequently than their perceived criminal activity.(4)

Because Reiman understands that society is divided, even as he is ambivalent whether race or class is most important, he can ask the question: "Who is Winning and Losing the War Against Crime?"

Reiman rejects conspiracy theories as impossible to prove and untenable. According to him, a conspiracy theory "would argue that the rich and powerful, seeing the benefits derived from the failure of criminal justice, consciously set out to use their wealth and power to make it fail." This is often what those with a radical critique of the power structure get accused of: reading some malice into the heads of the rich. Actually, radicals have a critique of what those in power do even when they are doing things they honestly believe are just right (which is as hard to believe as a conspiracy theory).

Reiman identifies three aspects of the failure of criminal justice, which are its Pyrrhic defeat. First, things that might actually decrease crime are not done: drugs are not decriminalized, poverty is not ameliorated, education is not provided, and so on. This results in a high rate of crime. Second, crimes of the rich and powerful are not identified as crimes. This criminalizes the poor. Third, the bias in all levels of the criminal justice system of nation and class is not addressed. This ensures that only certain groups are arrested and imprisoned. "In short, the effect of current criminal justice policy is at once to narrow the public's conception of what is dangerous to acts of the poor *and* to present a convincing embodiment of this danger."(5)

The question Reiman addresses is not how this came to be, but instead why it persists. He correctly recognizes that first, the system is benefiting those who could change it if they wanted to, at the expense of those without power. But his second reason gives too much credit to the Amerikan middle classes. "Because the criminal justice system shapes the public's conception of what is dangerous, it creates the impression that the harms it is fighting are the *real* threats to society — thus, even when people see the system as less than a roaring success they demand more of the same: more police, more prisons, longer prison sentences and so on."(6)

Reiman thinks that the "real" threats to society are the rich, who are oppressing the Amerikan middle classes, including the working classes. Actually, the Amerikans' gut instinct is more correct: the toppling of Amerikan society will be done by the oppressed internal colonies with the help of those external. Reiman expects them to discard their conservative impulse toward disparities of wealth, but MIM expects no such thing.

Reiman does at least recognize that "those who are mainly victimized by the 'failure' to reduce crime are by and large the poor themselves." This is true both because they are more likely to have crimes committed against them and because they will be victimized by the criminal injustice system.

Reiman argues against the implicit ideology of criminal justice on two counts. First, it concentrates on individuals and thus "*diverts out attention away from our institutions, away from consideration of whether out institutions themselves are wrong or unjust or indeed 'criminal'*." Second, "the criminal law is put forth as the *minimum neutral ground rules* for any social living." That means that after diverting our attention from the injustice of our social institutions, it "bestows on those institutions the mantle of its own neutrality."(7)

According to Reiman, the individual guilt approach of criminal justice puts exclusive focus on one half of the justice equation: whether the individual has fulfilled an obligation to society. "*It is to look the other way from the issue of whether the fellow citizens have fulfilled their obligations to him or her.*"(p. 155) MIM has said over and over that there is no reason for individuals to rehabilitate themselves to a society that never habilitated them in the first place, and Reiman makes the same point. "*Justice is a two-way street — but criminal justice is a one-way street.*"(8)

The fact is, whether the society will call something a crime depends on the circumstances under which it occurred. Criminal justice's sleight-of-hand is that it decides which of those circumstances is important.

> "Killing someone is ordinarily a crime, but if it is in self-defense or to stop a deadly crime, it is not. Taking property by force is usually a crime, but if the taking is retrieving what has been stolen, then no crime has been committed. ...This means that when we call something a crime, we are saying that the conditions in which it occurs are not themselves to criminal or deadly or oppressive or so unjust as to make an extreme response reasonable or justifiable or non-criminal. This means that when the system holds an individual accountable for a crime, *it implicitly conveys the message that the social conditions in which the crime occurred are not responsible for the crime*, that they are not so unjust as to make a violent response to them excusable."(8)

Reiman uses the example of the law against theft to show that the neutrality of criminal justice is in fact biased toward the present social structure. Even under socialism there will be laws against theft, but the thing is that the law here and now is protecting those who have property *now* from those who don't. (9)

Reiman includes lots of polls to demonstrate that most

Amerikans prefer more criminal injustice to a just social order. He uses them to illustrate his contention that they are duped by the upper classes — that the masses are asses. "It is clear that Americans have been successfully deceived as to what are the greatest dangers to their lives, limbs, and possessions."(10) Actually, it's Reiman who's been deceived, and he should have caught on by now.

MIM recommends this book for its good information and some good analysis. With knowledge of MIM's line on the labor aristocracy as a backdrop, this is very useful book.

Notes:
1. p. 5
2. p. 88.
3. p. 101.
4. p. 102.
5. p. 150.
6. p. 151.
7. p. 155.
8. p. 156.
9. p. 157.
10. p. 161.

Soledad Brother

The Prison Letters of George Jackson

Review excerpt from MIM Notes 48, January 1991

George Jackson's letters to his family, friends and legal counsel are uplifting writings, the words of a prisoner who would not compromise with the authorities because he knew it would do no good. Jackson's letters affirm the need to study political economy to build revolution while conveying the repression of solitary confinement and 23-hour-a-day lockdown.

Jackson's analysis of non-violence is right on. The reality of prison life shows non-violence for what it is — a privilege for those who command the power of the law on their side.

"The concept of nonviolence is a false ideal," says Jackson in criticizing Martin Luther King, Jr., the Black leader who lead much of the Civil Rights Movement around desegregation. "It presupposes the existence of compassion and a sense of justice on the part of one's adversary. When this adversary has everything to lose and nothing to gain by exercising justice and compassion, his reaction can only be negative" (p. 128).

Jackson saw the limitations of non-violent protest in the internationalist terms of the struggles in Vietnam and the Philippines (p. 166). Still, this criticism could not be mistaken for a mindless acceptance of violence as a tactic: "It may serve our purpose to claim nonviolence, but we must never delude ourselves into thinking that we can seize power from a position of weakness, with half measures, polite programs, righteous indignation, loud entreaties" (p. 167).

Jackson knew that study was key to advancing the national revolution and that without advanced theory the revolutionary army he envisioned would be led down a blind alley.

"To seize power for the people and relegate fascism to the history books the vanguard must change the basic patterns of thought. We are going to have to study the principles of people's movements. We are going to have to study them where they took place and interpret them to fit our situation here. We have yet to discover the meaning of people's war, people's army" (p. 168).

Focoism

The biggest weakness in Jackson's letters is his fondness for the focoist revolutionary model, in which a small group sparks the masses to rebel through an armed action. Jackson identifies himself with Ernesto Che Geuvarra, the Cuban focoist who fought the Cuban Revolution with Fidel Castro. Jackson is also a fan of Franz Fanon, who believed that armed struggle itself creates a revolutionary transformation. Jackson mentions many revolutionaries in his letters, but he is not advocating Marxism-Leninism-Maoism as the way forward.

In a letter to Angela Davis, Jackson suggests his program for an "antiestablishment war." This involves getting some money (unspecified means), opening "as many skeet, trap, rifle, and pistol ranges as I could rent space for around the black community," beginning martial arts training and publishing propaganda on military strategy. All this would be done, in Jackson's words, "without a hint of political flavoring" (p. 223).

Jackson relies on the idea that an armed action, not political struggle, will create revolutionaries and bring the revolution. He concludes this section saying "'One doesn't wait for all conditions to be right to start the revolution, the forces of the revolution itself will make the conditions right.' Che said something like this" (p. 223).

MIM suggests that people read George Jackson as a strong case for liberation of the Black colony within the United States. Jackson supports self-determination and Black liberation to the end and was a strong ally of the international proletariat.

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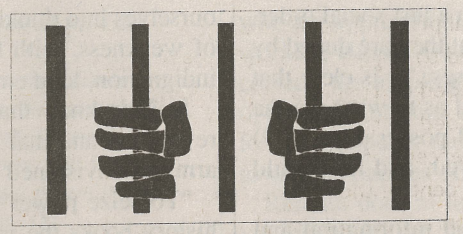

Amerikkkan Lockdown Index:

A tool for anti-prison activism

Violent Crime

Homicide rate per 100,000 population, 1973: 9.4
Increase in prison population, 1980-1994: 1,000,000
Homicide rate per 100,000 population, 1993: 9.3
Percent change in homicide rate for men aged 15-19, 1985-1991: +154
Percent change in the number of inmates, 1980-1991: +150
Percent change in serious violent crime rate, 1980-1991: -4
Proportion of arrests that are for violent offenses: 1/7
Proportion of arrests that are for drug offenses: 1/12
Proportion of arrests that are for a violent crime resulting in injury: 1/33
Proportion of violent crime victims who go to an emergency room for their injury: 1/12
Proportion of murder victims killed by a family member or someone they knew: 8/10
Percent of murders where the killer was a "stranger" to the victim, 1976: 13.8
Percent of murders where the killer was a "stranger" to the victim, 1993: 14.0
Percent of the increase in prison population accounted for by nonviolent offenders, 1980-1993: 84
Percent of federal prisoner population incarcerated for nonviolent crimes: 89
Percent of new admissions to federal prisons that are for nonviolent crimes: 94
Percent of Texas prison admissions for nonviolent offenses: 77
Percent of murder, rape, robbery and assault known to police committed by people on parole or probation: 4
Percent of U.S. public who say they feel unsafe walking in their own area after dark: 41
Risk of serious violent crime for a white womyn aged 65 or older compared to a Black male teenager: 1:65

Drugs

Blacks as percent of population: 12
Blacks as percent of all monthly drug users: 13
Blacks as percent of drug possession convictions: 55
Blacks as percent of drug possession prison sentences: 74
Percent change in Black arrests for drug offenses, 1985-1989: +115
Percent change in white arrests for drug offenses, 1985-1989: +27
Percent of state prisoner population convicted on drug charges, 1979: 6
Percent of state prisoner population convicted on drug charges, 1991: 21
Percent of Federal prisoner population convicted on drug charges, 1979: 25

Percent of Federal prisoner population convicted on drug charges, 1991: 58
Amount of marijuana needed to trigger a federal 5-year mandatory minimum sentence: 100 kilos
Amount of powder cocaine needed to trigger a federal 5-year mandatory minimum sentence: 500 grams
Amount of crack cocaine needed to trigger a federal 5-year mandatory minimum sentence: 5 grams
Blacks as percent of those arrested on crack charges: about 90
Whites as percent of those arrested on powder cocaine charges: 75
Percent of new prison admissions for drug offenses that are Black or Hispanic: 90
Blacks as percent of Columbus, OH population: 8
Blacks as percent of Columbus, OH drug arrests: 90
Blacks as percent of those Baltimore arrests for "drug abuse violations" (1991): 85.7
Blacks as percent of Baltimore city population (1990): 59.2

Prisoners

Total number of prison and jail inmates, 1994: 1,549,584
Percent change in prison and jail population, 1980-1994: 212.7
Number of people of probation or parole, 1993: 2,600,000
U.S. Black incarceration rate per 100,000 population, 1992-1993: 1,947
U.S. white incarceration rate per 100,000 population, 1992-1993: 306
Japanese rate of incarceration per 100,000 population, 1992-1993: 36
Hispanic incarceration rate per 100,000 population in 1980: 163
Hispanic incarceration rate per 100,000 population in 1993: 529
Proportion of Alaskan prison population that is "native": 1/3
Proportion of Alaskan population that is "native": 1/6
Estimated lifetime risk of arrest for urban Black men, in percent: 80
Blacks as percent of Illinois population: 15
Blacks as percent of Illinois state prisoners: 63
Percent of Baltimore Black men age 18-35 under criminal justice supervision (1992): 56
Percent of Washington, D.C. Black men age 18-35 under criminal justice supervision (1992): 42
Number of Black men who would be in prison in 2020 if present annual rates of increase continue: 4,500,000
Percent of adult population under some form of correctional supervision: 2.7
Number of people per year admitted to "locked facilities": 11,000,000
Number of days it takes to lock up enough people to fill the New Orleans Superdome: 2
Proportion of Black men aged 18-34 admitted to prison or jail per year (1994 est.): 1/3
Proportion of Black men aged 18-34 incarcerated on any one day (1994 est.): 1/10
Proportion of all men with a criminal record on file (est.): 1/4
Number of new prisons built in the U.S. since 1980: 600+
Number of prisoners with tuberculosis, 1992: 48,000
Estimated ratio of AIDS infection rate in prisons to rate in outside population: 14:1
Number of Mississippi prisoners who had individual air conditioners when the state passed a law banning them for prisoners: 0

Pigs, Judges, etc.

Chance of receiving death sentences for people convicted of killing whites compared to people convicted of killing Blacks: 11:1
Ratio of Black to white "unfounded" arrest rates in Oakland, CA: 12:1
Ratio of Black or Hispanic to white average bail for the same charge in Connecticut: 2:1
Chance of being kept in jail instead of released after "public order" charges for young unemployed Black men versus young unemployed white men (in Florida): 3:1
Latinos as proportion of those under probation in Florida: 1/2
Latinos as proportion of Florida population: 1/8

Number of Florida probationers allowed to vote: 0
Proportion of Blacks who told one large poll that police treat Blacks less fairly than whites: 3/4
Number of U.S. citizens who have lost their voting privileges because of convictions: 4,000,000
Number of Washington D.C. corrections staff convicted of serious crimes, 1989-1994: 50
Amount New York City spent on police brutality lawsuits and settlements in five years: $87,000,000
Proportion of law enforcement officers killed in 1993, compared to 1973: 1/2
Weekly earnings of drug-dealing New York City pig known to snort cocaine off his dashboard: $8,000
1990 U.S. police budgets: $32,000,000,000
Ratio of U.S. Department of Justice budget in 1992, compared to 1980: 4:1
Percent change in the number of Federal prosecutors, 1980-1992: +140
Percent change in combined budgets for all prosecutors, 1979-1990: +230
Percent change in the number of crime stories on major network TV news shows, 1991-1993: +186

Wimmin

Number of wimmin's prisons built in the 1960s: 7
Number of wimmin's prisons built in the 1980s: 34
Number of wimmin in prison, 1980: 12,331
Number of wimmin in prison, 1994: 64,403
Proportion of Black wimmin aged 18-29 under criminal justice control (1989): 1/37
Proportion of Latino wimmin aged 18-29 under criminal justice control (1989): 1/56
Proportion of white wimmin aged 18-29 under criminal justice control (1989): 1/100
Percent change in number of wimmin arrested, 1984-1993: 37
Percent change in number of wimmin in prison, 1984-1993: 181
Percent of California wimmin admitted to prison for violent crime convictions, 1982: 32.7
Percent of California wimmin admitted to prison for violent crime convictions, 1992: 16
Proportion of wimmin in prison for drug offenses, 1979: 1/10
Proportion of wimmin in prison for drug offenses, 1986: 1/8
Proportion of wimmin in prison for drug offenses, 1991: 1/3
Percent of wimmin in prison who have children: 78
Percent of wimmin state prisoners who receive visits from minor children: 9

Youth

Percent of juvenile prison population incarcerated for nonviolent crimes: 85
Ratio of Black to white juveniles arrested for drug sales in Baltimore, 1981: 6:1
Ratio of Black to white juveniles arrested for drug sales in Baltimore, 1991: 100:1
Change in percent of white juveniles placed in detention centers, 1984-1988: -2
Change in percent of Black juveniles placed in detention centers, 1984-1988: +269
Percent of the 65,000 incarcerated juveniles who commit "suicidal acts" each year: 17
Homicide rate among Black youths, per 100,000: 34.9
Homicide rate among white youths, per 100,000: 4.4
Percent of juvenile arrests that are for violent crimes: 6
Percent of juvenile arrests that are for "forcible rape" or murder: 0.4
Percent of juvenile property crime cases waived to adult court: 45
Percent of juvenile violent crime cases waived to adult court: 34
Percent of juvenile drug cases waived to adult court: 12
Change in rate of waiving juvenile drug cases to adult court, 1987-1991: +152
Cost of incarcerating youth, per year: $3,200,000,000
Number of hours some Idaho 13-year-olds were forced to stand with noses pressed against a wall, for "talking" (per day): 16

Economics

Average cost of incarceration per inmate per year: $22,000
Ratio of increase in national corrections spending to increase in military spending over the last 20 years: 3:1
Estimated 1996 percent increase in total prison appropriations: 13.3
Average cost of prison construction, per cell: $54,000
Amount spent on private security systems by individuals and businesses, per year: $65,000,000,000
Range of estimates for the ratio of white collar crime to personal and household crime in terms of economic cost: 7:1 to 25:1
Annual revenue of the private prison industry: $250,000,000
Number of privately managed prisons: 88
Number of prisoners in privately managed prisons in 1984: 2,500
Number of prisoners in privately managed prisons in 1996, approximately: 50,000
Proportion of growth rate of private prisons to growth rate of state prisons: 4:1
Number of full-time corrections employees, 1992: 523,000
Number of Fortune 500 companies that employ more than 523,000 people: 1
What the unemployment rate of 5.9% would be if male prisoners were counted as part of the labor force: 7.5%
Percent of Connecticut major felony defendants represented by public defenders: 75
Percent of all justice system money spent on police: 43
Percent of all justice system money spent on prisons: 34
Percent of all justice system money spent on courts: 13
Percent of all justice system money spent on prosecutors: 8
Percent of all justice system money spent on public defenders: 2
Amount of money Virginia prisoners are given when they are released, in addition to a bus ticket: $25

California

Ratio of California prison spending to higher education spending 15 years ago: 1:6
Ratio of California prison spending to higher education spending in 1994: 1:1
Average salary for a California corrections officer: $55,000
Number of members of California's Correctional Peace Officers Association: 23,000
Rank of California's Correctional Peace Officers Association among all California campaign contributors: 2
Percent change in California prison population, 1980-1993: +400
Percent of those additional cells filled with people convicted of violent crimes: 27
Percent of second and third felony convictions in Los Angeles County, under "three strikes" law, that were for murder, rape, robbery, kidnapping, or carjacking, in 1994: 4
Percent change in chance of going to jail for a drug arrest in California in 1992, compared to 1980: +500
Cost of life incarceration for average California prisoner: $1,500,000
Rand Corporation's estimate of the annual cost of California's "three strikes" law: $4,500,000,000-6,500,000,000
California's annual prison system budget, not counting construction of new prisons: $3,600,000,000
Proportion of California inmates sentenced on drug offenses who are Black: 7/10
Proportion of California prison drug treatment slots allocated to whites: 2/3
Number of pigs who participated in the "Operation Sunrise" sweep to capture oppressed-nation gang members in L.A.: 800
Number of "Operation Sunrise" arrests: 63
Number of "Operation Sunrise" arrests that led to violent felony charges: 1

Statistics compiled from *The Real War on Crime: The Report of the National Criminal Justice Commission*, edited by Stephen R. Donziger (HarperPerennial, 1996). MIM does not agree with the liberal politics behind the book (see the review in this issue), but we do appreciate the collection of relevant facts.

Labor Aristocracy Debate Continues

Struggle for MIM Line Rages In the Imperialist Countries

Here we run an excerpt of a discussion with a central committee member of another organization in the imperialist countries. MIM did not partake in the interview; rather two sympathizers independently discussed MIM line as part of their overall efforts to study and resolve the political issues surrounding the collapse of the Soviet bloc. MIM's interjections below came after the interview was over.

We do not print the name or details of the participants, because the central committee member we will refer to by the fake name of "Gus" felt trapped by the MIM sympathizers and didn't want the interview published at all. MIM had already done the work to publish this interview when it received a request to respect the anonymity of the participants. So we have concealed names.

Throughout Europe and North America, the collapse of the old pro-Soviet communist parties (CPs) has had in its main aspect a thrust to the right. Rather than conclude the Maoists were right and the criticisms of Stalin were wrong, the old CPs move rightward and take up social-democracy. The reason for this is that the old CPs were for more than a generation principally based in the labor aristocracy. On the other hand, there were also proletarian forces in the CPs. This is especially true in Russia, where comrades have a new appreciation of Stalin and are looking critically at what Khruschev and Brezhnev were saying about Mao. That is not to mention those European countries, such as Albania, where the labor aristocracy was not a major social force and where there are clearly exploited white workers and peasants.

This interview is further proof to the international communist movement that workers are not thin-skinned, and the advanced workers are searching for the answers MIM is providing. The advanced workers want an explanation for why their peers are so reactionary. One Michigan autoworker was so delighted to find the MIM answers, he tracked MIM down to make a large contribution. Here in this interview we learn about a former CPUSA member who used to distribute newspapers at a plant. He felt that MIM line was more in touch with reality than his own party's and he left the CPUSA after years of work. More work needs to be done to reach out to the advanced proletarian elements freed up by the collapse of the Soviet bloc.

What About Maoism?

Interviewer 1: There's a lot, in terms of the analysis of the Soviet Union and what went wrong, that you have in common with what the Maoists say. When the revisionist road or the right deviationist road started, after the death of Stalin. I think you agree that the introduction of profit structures in production started in the '60s. I've read documentation from MIM on that. And I think there are other similarities also. But you have some differences with Maoists, also.

Gus: Well, I don't know. What I've seen of Maoists – and first of all, I'm not an expert on Maoism. But groups of people who call themselves Maoists in Europe and Scandinavia of the '70s, always seem to me to be ... well, some of them seem to me to be pretty wild. Calling for revolution in countries where there is no possibility of a revolution, sometimes in vague, sometimes in direct terms, that now we have to arm the people. Nobody has anything against revolution, of course. But to call for revolution, to urge people to start an armed struggle, in 1974, against the X [imperialist] government or the Y [imperialist] government was just insanity. The preconditions weren't there.

MIM: Except in circumstances where it is legal in a certain limited way as in California when the Black Panthers started carrying guns, MIM does not support the initiation of armed struggle in the imperialist countries. We have always followed Mao in thinking that the imperialist countries would be the last to fall, and that we in the imperialist countries must engage in long and less glorious tasks in the legal realm. While we do not have the kind of furnace of class struggle that occurs in armed struggle, we must find ways to temper ourselves through legal, communications, education and financial struggle on behalf of the revolution. If we do a good job in these areas, no comrades actually engaged in armed struggle will begrudge us.

Gus: Another thing that a lot of the groups that call themselves Maoist was their attitude to the Soviet Union in the '70s, and that echoed things that were said and printed in China. I have a booklet here somewhere, published in the early '70s, talking about the *Soviet empire, Soviet imperialism*, which I thought was completely off the point.

If you apply the definition of the word "imperialism" to mean that there's a mother country which is imposing its political and economic will on colonies, living off them, it's pretty difficult to explain why "colonies" like East Germany or Czechoslovakia have higher living standards than the mother country, or why "colonies" like the Baltics are *receiving* semi-finished goods and *exporting* back to the so-called mother country finished goods on exchange terms which are at least, at the very least, beneficial to the colony.

Interviewer 1: I'm gonna try to find the grain of truth in it, in that there, in Cuba and in China, hasn't there been from the '60s on, a struggle with the Soviet Union, where, for them to keep a revolutionary line, they had to struggle *against* the Soviet model, the Soviet model being, at that time, one that is beginning to have revisionist forms...

Gus: Well, wait a minute. That's something else. I'm talking about the idea of a Soviet empire. Certainly, I don't see any other empires where the mother country is transferring large parts of its social surplus to the colonies.

MIM: In fact, imperialism by Lenin's definition is the highest stage of capitalism, characterized by the export of capital. Recently, a Japanese official had to resign because of Korean protests over his remark that Japan did "some good things" in its occupation of Korea and China in the 1930s. That included building railroads and other infrastructure. Colonialists always do transfer some wealth. The only real question is how much wealth they get in return and what social relations are involved.

At this point a third person enters the conversation with the interviewer and Gus. We will refer to him as Interviewer 2.

Interviewer 1 to Interviewer 2: I started asking Gus about what his differences with the Maoists were.

Gus: And I said that I am far from an expert on Maoism. But the first thing is that it appears to me that there were a lot of differences. The Maoists in Europe that you've heard of in the '70s and '80s, seem to me to be very sectarian, dogmatically against the Soviet Union. One guy who you could call a Maoist, Jan Myrdal, wrote books about China, [and] he made the point very clearly that there was only one country in which socialism existed and that was China. All the rest of it was rubbish.

Now, whatever you say about the Soviet Union, that's a dangerous way of analyzing it. It's hard to put yourself backward in history. But in 1980, after the war in Afghanistan had been going on openly for a year...

Interviewer 2: Right.

MIM: Myrdal wrote some books on the Cultural Revolution that we continue to distribute (*China: The Revolution Continued* and *Report from a Chinese Village*). On the other hand, he also went over to Deng Xiaoping revisionism, last we knew. It's a fair concern to be asking whether only China had socialism. Although all peoples are equal, not all peoples are equally revolutionary at any given moment. We have now learned that in all countries there must be a cultural revolution to consolidate the all-round dictatorship of the proletariat over the bourgeoisie, especially as the new bourgeoisie arises in the top ranks of the party itself.

Gus: I can't talk about the Maoists in the United States. I don't know much about them.

Interviewer 1: Unfortunately, I haven't mailed you their papers. I wish I had.

Gus: Yeah. You sent me this thing of theirs on Stalin. And I thought it was pretty good.

Interviewer 1: But their emphasis is also on the principal contradiction being between the core countries and the periphery and support of Third World struggles.

Gus: Well, I don't know that that distinguishes them very much from, for example, Moscow in 1970. I mean, who was supporting, financially and militarily, Angola, Mozambique, Southern Yemen, Cuba, Vietnam, and all the rest of it, if not Moscow?

That's another peculiar thing in all of this. That the Chinese, and Maoists outside of China, have talked about that all the time. But exactly what support came out of Peking for revolutionary movements in other countries? It's very difficult for me to understand. North Korea was supported almost exclusively by Moscow. They have ties with China, of course, very amicable ones. But as far as I understand it almost all the technology and the weaponry came from the Soviet Union.

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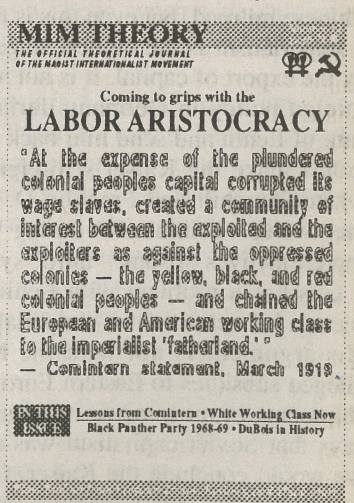
MIM THEORY
THE OFFICIAL THEORETICAL JOURNAL OF THE MAOIST INTERNATIONALIST MOVEMENT
Coming to grips with the
LABOR ARISTOCRACY
"At the expense of the plundered colonial peoples capital corrupted its wage slaves, created a community of interest between the exploited and the exploiters as against the oppressed colonies – the yellow, black, and red colonial peoples – and chained the European and American working class to the imperialist 'fatherland.'"
— Comintern statement, March 1919
Lessons from Comintern • White Working Class Now
Black Panther Party 1968-69 • DuBois in History

MIM: In the 1980s, revisionists in the Communist Workers Party and elsewhere said Maoists put too much emphasis on foreign policy, and really to prove that the Soviet Union was social-imperialist, one had to examine the mode of production on the ground in the Soviet Union in detail. MIM agreed with this much, and re-emphasized Red Papers 7, discovered the Bland book and took up a distribution of an academic review of the question of the mode of production in the Soviet Union.

Those people in Line of March and the Communist Labor Party, for instance, used to say that it was impossible for capitalism to be restored in the Soviet Union. Now that position is no longer tenable, and there is a duh-factor facing defenders of the old Soviet Union. This is the first time we have seen someone try to detach the foreign policy of the Soviet Union completely from its mode of production. This detachment seems to go along with a powerful mythology built up by the Soviet Union.

Gus says North Korea received aid from the Soviet Union "exclusively." He says the Soviets gave technology and weapons. He doesn't mention blood anywhere. It was the Chinese who lost hundreds of thousands of troops fighting the imperialists in Korea. That loss included Mao's own son, and Gus recalls that as "exclusive" support for North Korea from the Soviet Union!

In Angola, as we explained in MIM Theory 8, Mao sent aid to all organizations of armed struggle opposing the Portuguese colonialists. For the case of Mozambique, we show that at that time in 1970, communists had formed a Maoist party. Likewise, Cuba did receive some aid from China and was offered more, but the Cubans chose to go a different road and to follow the Soviet Union into hostility with China. Vietnam was also definitely a country that received supplies from both China and the Soviet Union. During the Cultural Revolution, an ultraleft faction seized control of the railways in a region and blocked Soviet supplies to Vietnam for a few days, but that was all – a few days. The remarkable thing was that aid to Vietnam from the Soviet Union did have to go through on the Chinese railroad, but even this is forgotten.

Imperialism is the highest stage of capitalism, characterized by the export of capital. It is not a foreign policy. The Kaiser's foreign policy in Germany during World War I was to take care of Lenin and send him back to Russia in a train car. That didn't make the Kaiser's foreign policy socialist. Likewise, when Churchill and Franklin D. Roosevelt sided with Stalin, they weren't communists during World War II. Nor were they representatives of some "third" system.

Gus has a problem with Lenin's theory of imperialism as seen in his definition of "imperialism" earlier in the interview. His argument is not with the Maoists per se. Pointing to alleged subsidies to Eastern Europe and other places and arms shipments to movements opposing Western imperialism, Gus says that Soviet capitalism was not imperialist. By his logic, we would conclude the Kaiser, Churchill and Roosevelt were not imperialist either, because they allied with communists at one time or another to win their inter-imperialist struggles.

The social-democrats make a more exaggerated form of Gus's error, because they also have their own theory of imperialism. According to social- democrats, the imperialists won't wage a war when it doesn't pay. Hence, if one can rationally argue about the costs of imperialism with the imperialists, they will reform, according to the social-democrats. They don't seem to realize that taxes and blood come from the proletariat and as long as the proletariat pays for the war, the imperialists don't care too much how much the war costs. Likewise in the Soviet Union, if the proletariat is paying for the subsidies that Gus sees, if the proletariat is what is gaining the imperialists their sphere of influence, which some day could return a profit in exactly the same way that it did for the Amerikan imperialists, French imperialists and British imperialists, then why should the Soviet social-imperialists mind that?

Like the social-democrats, Gus views the Soviet dumping as subsidies. He mistakes differences of culture, strategy and history amongst imperialists for a difference of system. He forgets that Japan too dumps its goods at a loss, because it is driven to push the other capitalists out of business, not because the Japanese capitalists are beneficent to foreign consumers. Here too Gus is buying into bourgeois market propaganda when he says a system is not exploitative (capitalism) when the consumer benefits in the short run. By this, we refer to his comments on lifestyle in East Europe. The fact that lifestyles were higher in some Soviet-dominated countries than in the Soviet Union itself, says nothing about the mode of production in those societies.

The Soviet Union's brand of social-imperialism only existed 35 years, even fewer than that by the period of time that Gus is fixating on. We should not be surprised that there are differences with the imperialism of the Amerika, England and France, which had long histories of colonialism as well, prior to imperialism.

The Soviet Union was the upstart as imperialist. Like the Japanese, the Soviet Union had its own long-term strategy of "dumping." Gus calls that dumping a subsidy, but we claim such an issue cannot be resolved outside the context of the class structure of the society, its mode of production. A country is imperialist abroad because of its internal structure. And even in the medium run this has bad consequences for the so-called beneficiaries, such as Cuba, which lost any hope of self-reliance under the onslaught of Soviet "aid."

On a rational level, the Soviet social-imperialists had to work their way into spheres of influence and other traditional imperialist goodies. They had to use a different strategy than those imperialists they were replacing. On the other hand, looking at imperialist strategies too much can be a mistake as well. Dialecticians see a system in crisis, full of contradictions. What might make sense for the imperialists doesn't always happen. Lenin never claimed that imperialism was a system that always everywhere reflected the logic of the whole system.

The social-democrats also attack Lenin's theory of imperialism, by saying it was wrong because there was no net export of capital, once repatriated profits were counted. This again was acting as if Lenin had said that capitalism could solve its problems of overproduction by exporting capital. The social-democrats smuggled in equilibrium assumptions into Lenin's theory of imperialism, but Lenin never said imperialism was a system that could achieve an equilibrium. If the system started out exporting capital, this is what marked it as apart from other capitalist systems or previous modes of production and made it imperialist. The fact that the imperialists would wind up with even more capital and overproduction after exporting capital is no surprise to dialecticians.

Just as we should not make an exception for social-democratic countries, we should also see that the Soviet Union had reached the highest stage of capitalism. It was new to the world of imperialism and had its own distinct cultural and strategic approaches, but it was still imperialist. To reach such a stage of capitalism and not be exporting capital – this is a case where if the facts disagree with the theory, so much worse for the facts. It turns out that the facts are simply old Soviet disinformation. For an example of the refutation of such material, we recommend Kostas Mavrakis's book *On Trotskyism*.

Gus: But to get back to Maoism, one thing it did, at least in Europe, is to give socialism a very bad name. The papers that were published and the statements that were made ranged from the childish to the fanatic. And a lot of people who might have been amenable to some kind of contact with socialism got the idea that the left is just a bunch of split-up, crackpot organizations all of whom spend most of their time yelling at each other.

I would say the damage they did was at least as big as the damage coming from non-criticism of the Soviet Union.

MIM: We don't know much about Maoism in the 1970s in Europe. However, we must object to equating how the Soviets split the international communist movement with whatever errors the European Maoists might have made. As Ludo Martens in Belgium has correctly pointed out on this question, the blame for the split in the international communist movement falls on Khruschev, his followers and successors. It was they who attacked Stalin out of the blue without preparing international communist opinion. Furthermore, beyond the issue of treating international comrades with a modicum of equality and process, there is the issue that Khruschev's evaluation of Stalin was simply incorrect, as the downfall of the Soviet Union now makes clear to all but the most thickheaded.

The question of forming a new party and the related question of whether we Maoists are sectarian to do so is a very delicate one. Practically speaking, the point can be moot, because in the case of the first Maoists in the United Snakes, they were expelled from the CPUSA. The word "sectarian" in this context should mean putting one's own organizational leadership above the interests of the international proletariat. With the collapse of the Soviet Union, it should again now be clear that it was the CPUSA in the wrong for expelling Maoists. They put their own adherence to Khruschev's splitting the international communist movement above the interests of the international proletariat.

The question of parties of a new type cannot be examined independently of the cardinal questions. After all Stalin himself would have disagreed with MIM's strategy of party-building at this stage as he explains in the *Foundations of Leninism*. If we were to split over just any question at all, we'd have to split with Stalin, so that goes to show we have to pick our cardinal questions and not just split all the time.

Hence, we base ourselves on the questions of the struggle against revisionism and the labor aristocracy, not the strategy of party-building in its own right. Practically speaking, the CPs were not allowing the struggle against revisionism to go forward and expelled the Maoists, so there was no road other than to form parties in the 1960s that eclipsed the old CPs – parties such as the Black Panther Party, the Progressive Labor Party, etc.

The labor aristocracy is another cardinal issue underlying the formation of new Maoist parties and it is a major explanation for why the CPs expelled the Maoists. Since we are correct not to conduct armed struggle now in the imperialist countries in most cases, we must admit that we lack a certain furnace of class struggle seen in other countries. We must admit that in North American history, in the 1940s and then again in the 1970s, tens of thousands of comrades simply degenerated from their previous radicalism of the 1930s and 1960s. When there is an armed struggle going, the fair-weather friends of the revolution get weeded out quickly. They won't commit to the party, and hence they are not able to take it down the opportunist road when we are all tossed into the furnace of class struggle.

Thus in the imperialist countries when we don't have this furnace of armed struggle, we have to rely more on explicit theoretical struggle to weed out the comrades who would take us to opportunist liquidationist outcomes as they already have in our history. Otherwise, we won't be in synch with our comrades in the world, the majority of whom must participate in armed struggle as part of daily life.

Secondly, the labor aristocracy is a cardinal question. We must recognize that these old CPs have a material basis to exist in the labor aristocracy. A peasant of the neo-colonies who has some foggy good impressions of Trotsky, Gus Hall or Browder is a much different case than someone who upholds Trotsky or Hall in the imperialist countries. The peasant is unlikely to be a conscious supporter of the labor aristocracy. For this reason our comrades Gonzalo in Peru and Sison in the Philippines took the course of fighting within the existing revisionist organizations first.

Interviewer 2: I don't think that all the criticisms, and the name-calling, like "social-imperialism," is correct. I argue to this day, I argue with Maoist friends of mine, on Cuba. And I will, I will continue to argue. And I don't think that it was an

imperialist relationship between the Soviet Union and Cuba. I think that it was absolutely necessary. And I'm not saying that the Soviet Union, you know, did it out of selfless proletarian internationalism, either. But I do think that the aid was necessary to the survival of Cuba. And that there was no way around it. And had it not been for that aid, there would be no Cuba today.

MIM: Again the analysis of Cuba is an emotional point for the old pro-Soviet CP circles. The alliance of Stalin with Churchill was "absolutely necessary" too. That doesn't make it name-calling when Stalin called Churchill "imperialist." If Stalin hadn't allied with one bloc of imperialists against the other, there would have been no Soviet Union after World War II. That doesn't mean those imperialists weren't imperialists!

As for Cuba's choices, it had the choice of accepting heavy Chinese aid. It didn't. Now we will never know what would have happened if Castro had allied with the Maoists for Third World armed struggle instead of siding with Khruschev and Brezhnev. How much further the wave of armed struggle in Latin America in the 1960s would have gotten, and how much international impact that would have had, we will never know, because Castro followed Khruschev into the Three Peacefuls as line and split the international communist movement.

There is another important angle here, the degree of pragmatism seen in the Third World comrades themselves. One line of thinking is that the Soviet Union could provide a better nuclear umbrella than China could, so it is better to side with the Soviets than with the Chinese. To this extent, there was also the pragmatist argument that one should not accept aid from China, because then the Soviets would find out about it. It all goes back to the Sino-Soviet split, as the discussants are pointing out, and there is no getting around summing up the blame.

We work very closely with Dennis Brutus, and we played a major role in stopping his deportation from the United States. He used to criticize the CP comrades for the Soviet Union's inadequate aid and he used to criticize Maoists for buying into the Cold War. Yet at the time of the Cold War in the 1980s, he also said that when he spoke with Zhou Enlai in the 1970s as a representative of the South African struggle, Zhou Enlai told him, "If you want aid, you know, you have to ask for it." The point was that China was not trying to force itself on the other Third World countries in the World Bank pattern. So we should also look at the choices comrades made in their views of the Sino-Soviet split. What did they ask for and why?

These comrades also don't mention in the context of their struggle with us how the Soviet Union left the Cubans in the lurch, because they know that it vindicates the Maoists. Cuba focused for decades on producing sugar, because it was supposedly confidently inserted in a socialist division of labor and socialism was supposedly incapable of turning back to capitalism. Now hardly anyone says that capitalism can never be restored once socialism is achieved. Unfortunately, now Cuba suffers more than other countries, because it had the heaviest aid from the Soviet Union. Cuba altered its economy more and over a longer period of time than other countries did to fit into the Soviet strategy and division of labor. Had it followed a more self-reliant road with a more diversified economy, it wouldn't be in this position now of learning many aspects of its economy from scratch.

Interviewer 1: I'm gonna step in here, and see if we can talk about the other major reason why [Interviewer 2] and I have an interest in MIM. And that is on the national question.

Why don't you give MIM's view on the national question and your problems with the CPUSA on the national question.

Interviewer 2: OK. As far as the national question, and nationalities, etc. Let's see now, where can I start? The CPUSA's orientation toward the national question in my opinion is lacking.

Gus: What do you mean by the national question?

Interviewer 2: I mean on the question of oppressed nationalities and peoples both domestically, in the United States, and around the world.

For instance, I think the CPUSA had an excellent line on the oppressed Black nation within the United States, until they dropped the line that the Black belt, which is five states in the South that had a majority Black population, they were considered a nation within the nation. In the 1960s, they had dropped that. They said it's racially divisive, that it was separatism, or whatever.

And the concept that started it was that Blacks had labored, created for the wealth. And by virtue of that, the wealth belonged to them. And therefore, that should be their country.

There's a group that took that up when the CPUSA had abandoned that idea. A group called the Republic of New Afrika had formed what they call the Provisional Revolutionary Government, and had a declaration of independence, and were heavily repressed by the U.S. government.

Now the refusal to support those people because, politically, the CP and other leftists too didn't agree with them, I think is incorrect. That's one thing.

We were studying a book called *Settlers*, by J. Sakai, who has an analysis of the United States that it's a settler country, it's a white settler dominated country. And that oppressed nationalities within the United States are the proletariat that built the nation. And they should be considered captive nations within the United States. That includes Puerto Ricans, Northern Mexico, which was annexed to the United States, and the Native American Indians, which a conscious effort on the part of white America was to depopulate this land and take it over for white European settlers.

This type of ideology the CPUSA finds divisive and they think that what they call the multi-national, multi-racial, male/female working class, they like to fantasize that this is a united working class, that we' re all together. It's not that way at all, I don't think.

During the campaign to stop NAFTA, the unions did what I thought was pretty good work trying to stop NAFTA, pinpointing the businesses as people trying to take advantage of

poor countries such as Mexico for profit, low-wage labor, to ruin their environment. But the way it was translated by most workers in this country, and Black workers, by the way, most American workers was that "Mexico is taking our jobs."

And I think the best representation of that was – and it wasn't across the board that the unions did a good job – but in a union publication there's a picture of people trying to swim the Rio Grande, being caught by Mexican border guards, trying to get into Mexico because "Mexico is stealing all the jobs." They took all the jobs and now we're trying to get into Mexico. All sorts of chauvinistic things came out in the campaign. And what it boiled down to was appealing to people's chauvinism to stop NAFTA. And that type of thing, I think, is a result of a way of thinking within the working class that hasn't been tackled by us Communists. And it hasn't been eradicated. In fact, I think we neglect and a lot of times we even go along with that, because of thinking: "Well, OK, the point is stop NAFTA." And in the process of stopping NAFTA, you begin to kind of look the other way when these chauvinist things start to untangle.

And I think that's sort of representative of ... to me, that's the best way of expressing the differences between the way that Maoists approach the national question and the way the CPUSA approaches things.

Gus: Well, there's several extremely important points you raise. One, to start at the end, the current discussion about joining the European Union, which is the new name for the Common Market after the Maastricht Treaty, it's not so much national chauvinistic, but it borders on that. And it results from trying to discuss – I gave a talk a couple of weeks ago – I said they're trying to discuss the European Union without discussing capitalism, which is like trying to discuss the New Testament without discussing Jesus. It can't be done. It also has to do with – the NAFTA thing and the EU thing – the fact that Communist Parties have not been able to maintain the idea of the united proletariat internationally. And I am absolutely convinced that all discussions that treat socialism or the progress towards socialism, and try to limit it to the boundaries of one country will always run into this problem.

Now I disagree with you about this national question. I think that in 1875, the idea of a Black nation, or an Indian nation somewhere, was a progressive idea. I don't think it's a progressive idea now. I think it does split the socialist movement, because capitalism is now so global that socialism that isn't global will in the end, I think, be reactionary. It will lead to ... you said "people close their eyes to chauvinism of certain types."

Interviewer 2: Oh, definitely.

Gus: That's what socialism in one country will lead to. Socialism in one country was a progressive idea in 1935. But it isn't a progressive idea any more.

And I think Malcolm X is an example of how people can start to get on the right road when they understand that it isn't Black and white. It's a *class* society. And that's what seems to me to be in danger.

It is true objectively, I agree completely that there is a Black nation. In the sense that the larger part of the Black population belongs to the proletariat. But on the other hand, the largest part of the white influx also did. I mean, historically, once you get past 1840, the vast majority of whites are simply being imported as labor. The vast majority of them settled in the cities and became workers, despite what Milton Friedman said.

But I could see in the NAFTA thing a very clear parallel. As soon as that thing came up that you mentioned about "they're taking our jobs," you're in a terrible corner. You've painted yourself into it. I don't mean you, but...

Interviewer 2: Right. I understand.

Gus: I know you left the CP.

Interviewer 2: Yeah.

Gus: I said to [...] at the time, I can't make any comment on your view of the CP. You know much more about it than I do. But it still seems to me to be the only thing, the only *real* rallying point in the United States.

I mean, this Maoist movement is probably very, very small.

Interviewer 2: Oh, it is. I'd say it's maybe three or four times smaller than the CP.

The way I look at the CP and the Committees of Correspondence (CoC) is, like, bad and worse. The Committees of Correspondence are worse. But I see the CP, to me, the politics that they are espousing are social democratic politics. And they have a pamphlet they circulate called "Socialism, USA." And in that pamphlet they tell workers that the way socialism is gonna be accomplished is through Congress. And there's a disclaimer in there that says well, you know, these guys aren't gonna just give it up and not fight back. But that it's going to happen through Congress, and there will be a socialist USA, and so forth.

I just don't, I don't see socialism coming that way. And I don't think that anybody who has studied Marxism ... I would think that they were trying to deceive people, by saying look, this is the way socialism is gonna be accomplished in this country. And also the point of view that has been expressed by many leaders in the CP that they could never see fascism as a problem in this country because the American people have such strong democratic traditions. I think that's pretty sad. Because the so-called democratic traditions in America are not democratic. It's democratic for a section of the population. And I think also that the CP discounts that the ruling class needs a base in the working class. In Amerika they have had that base. And without that base, they would not have been able to survive.

The buying off of the working class has worked very well for them. Right now in Amerika – this is a fact that nobody will disagree with. The CP will tell you – 12% of the population in this country is organized labor, 12% of the working population. In this 1970s, it was 27%. Now, if we analyze capitalism the way the CP does, the reason why this has declined is because capitalists have exported jobs to low-wage countries.

And it isn't that way at all. It isn't just because they exported capital that there are so many less unions. There's a lot of other reasons. Where was the labor movement and where *is* the labor movement in organizing the unorganized? Now, if they are doing their job, and they're organizing the unorganized, something's wrong. So, what they tend to do is blame the repressive laws of the government. Twelve years of Reagan-Bush. That's why so few people are organized. But I don't think it's that way at all. I think it's a lot deeper. Neglect of immigrant workers, I think, is a major mistake that unions have made.

It's quite a contrast to the early part of this century, during the '20s and '30s, when there was a major effort to organize immigrant workers. And of course, we're talking about white European immigrants. But as more immigrants began to come in here from Third World countries, dark-skinned peoples, labor did not want to organize such people. Maybe it was ... they claim it's unconscious. I don't know. But they sure didn't make an effort to organize those people. And I think that has a lot to do with national chauvinism.

Again, the criticism of the settler state has to do with that. And I think it's very very strong in the working class. When I was selling the People's Daily World, and bringing it into the plant, the pages of the World during the Reagan administration was the working class hates Reagan. And it was a fantasy. The majority of workers liked Reagan. And that was the truth. We can't build communism; we can't build a revolutionary party unless we're truthful with ourselves first, and with the working people. Because if we're telling people one thing and the reality is something else, I think that, you know, it looks like we're not dealing with reality...

And a lot of white workers, they felt very comfortable with Reagan. They felt comfortable with the idea of a campaign against what they called reverse-discrimination. And I think that's a problem that the CP put their head in the sand by saying, "Oh, no. We have an anti-racist majority in this country."

Now this is one of the problems that the Committees of Correspondence was able to get a hold of. They got a hold of the fact that a lot of this stuff was true. The party leadership was saying there's an anti-racist majority. But that's not the reality. And a lot of people were saying, "Gee, that's true." And it gave the CoC a lot of credibility, because some of the stuff that they brought up was true.

Well, then, the split comes. They thought they were gonna be purged. Well, there was no purge. There never was gonna be a purge. It was all in their heads. So they left on their own accord. And when they left, they don't know where they're going. They have no map of where they're going. And I think they're very ineffective at what they're doing.

But the CP, I see them more as a Social-Democratic force. And that's the main reason why I left.

Gus: Well, I am not trying to argue for or against the party. I see different aspects of it from here, and much less of it.

As I understand the CP in the States, they have clearly said they want ownership by the working class. They want a socialist system of public ownership. So I'm a little wary of using the word Social-Democrat about them...

The fact that certain parts of the working class and, let us say, farmers, shouldn't blind us to the fact that they're still part of the working class. And I consider teachers, nurses, and great many other service...

Interviewer 1: There's an interesting point that MIM makes. Is the white working class a labor aristocracy? I think the argument is that they create value, but they don't create surplus value. That is, they get part of the wealth created by the Third World labor exploitation. And that sets up an objective base for them to support imperialism. And that one of the main struggles is going to be Third World struggles against imperialism, with the white working class supporting imperialism. As a communist, one should understand that the white working class is gonna be the enemy in a lot of struggles, like they supported the Gulf War. And if you're gonna make headway against chauvinism in the working class you've got to be critical of the working class, and you got to accept that you're gonna be in the minority and making unpopular opinions when you work with the white working class if you are gonna do it, to try to get as much support as possible for Third World struggles.

Gus: I have one quick comment to make about this economic calculation that you made. That sounds extremely weird to me. I mean, the situation is pretty straight forward both in the United States and [X country]. The working class is the working class. Surplus value is surplus value. The fact that the worker uses part of his wage to purchase low-priced goods or products that are based on labor outside the country doesn't change the fact that he's producing surplus value. I mean, the relation between an auto worker in Detroit and his employer doesn't change because he can use part of his wage to buy bananas.

Interviewer 2: That's not the whole thing though. Let's talk about the products put into the vehicle that we're building. You go from Korean steel...

Gus: Yeah.

Interviewer 2: ... to parts made in El Salvador and in Brazil ...

Gus: ... and in the clothing business in Guatemala. I'm quite aware of that. To get back to what I said before, capital is global.

Interviewer 2: That's right.

Gus: The distribution of labor and the distribution of non-labor intensive operations is very clear. And the fact that capital has to move to more labor intensive areas is a confirmation of the fact that this crisis that has been going for 25 years continues to go. There is a crisis in the rate of profit that is continuing to decline. That's why, when they build auto plants in Mexico, they use human labor and very few robots. And that has gone so far that, I saw in Business Week, Nissan has a plant which is producing with Mexican workers and exporting cars to Japan.

But as long as the discussion is based on the fact that "We have to protect jobs," there comes a point when the system reaches a point where you must take a step forward.

It seems to me, the only argument that can be made to the working class now – and I don't want, at this point, to get into the question of whether the working class is racist or not. I find that an almost meaningless question. Not least because there have been inter-racial unions. The thing at Stevens went on for many years. But they finally formed an inter-racial union. But the only way to argue now is to show people, in the same way that Lenin talked about the First World War, you are being ground down by the system and your children will be flushed down the toilet. You cannot get anywhere within the framework of the capitalist system. No accommodation can be made with it anymore. That is the only way you can get people in the OECD countries, the working class there, to understand what is happening.

Interviewer 2: But they won't. They won't understand that. See, this is how it's being posed: if you, a consumer, in Amerika, do not buy Amerikan made products, you and your children's future is going down the toilet. That strikes a bell. That tells people: "Yeah, that's where it's at. And that's what we need to do. We need to buy Amerikan. That's what's going to save us."

The working class looks at it this way: "We had things fine. Things were great here at one time, until one, imports started to come in here and compete; two, jobs started to be exported; and three, an influx of immigrants taking our jobs away, people from Third World countries."

That is the problem to the working class. They'll respond to that. But what you just said, they will not respond to. Because they don't believe that. They believe that the height of working class power was at the end of World War II to somewhere around the late '70s, early '80s. That's when things were right. That's when things were good. Now, it's in decline. And where us Marxists disagree with them, is that the system itself is the problem, whereas to them, to the mainstream working class people, it isn't that. It's the decline of Amerikan power on a world scale.

The globalization of capitalism, I don't have a disagreement with. I know it's global. And that's what most working class people see. That's the problem. Not capitalism. But that capitalism has become global. And the threat is not from capitalism itself, because capitalism has brought so many good things to working people.

The argument that I've gotten as an active member of the Communist Party was, "In what other country can you have it so good. Look at what this country has to offer. And not only that, [Interviewer 2], but you have your freedom, because you can talk to me like this, and you're not going to be put in jail for talking like this."

Gus: Well, the key to working class consciousness or unconsciousness in the Western countries is that the propaganda apparatus has successfully cut the bonds between the wealth of the OECD countries and the poverty of the colonies. That is, everybody in Amerika who talks the way you cited is convinced that things were good because of something that happened in Amerika.

MIM: Right, the problem is that Amerikan workers believe they earned this wealth through their own "hard work." Many so-called communist leaders are doing nothing to remove that illusion. Instead they cater to it in a bid for support.

In conclusion, with regard to this interview, we do not think it is an accident that it started talking about the Soviet Union and Stalin and what happened afterward, and ended on the national question and the labor aristocracy. These issues are actually closely linked. Those more critical of Stalin are also more based in the labor aristocracy.

We can look back on our movement the last 50 years and say Stalin way back there is to blame for Soviet collapse today and the mess of the communist movements in the imperialist countries. Alternatively, we can look back and say Stalin was correct about the national question; Stalin was correct about the operation of the law of value and how socialist economies had to be organized, and that is why his successors who overthrew the socialist system saw stagnation and then outright economic decline.

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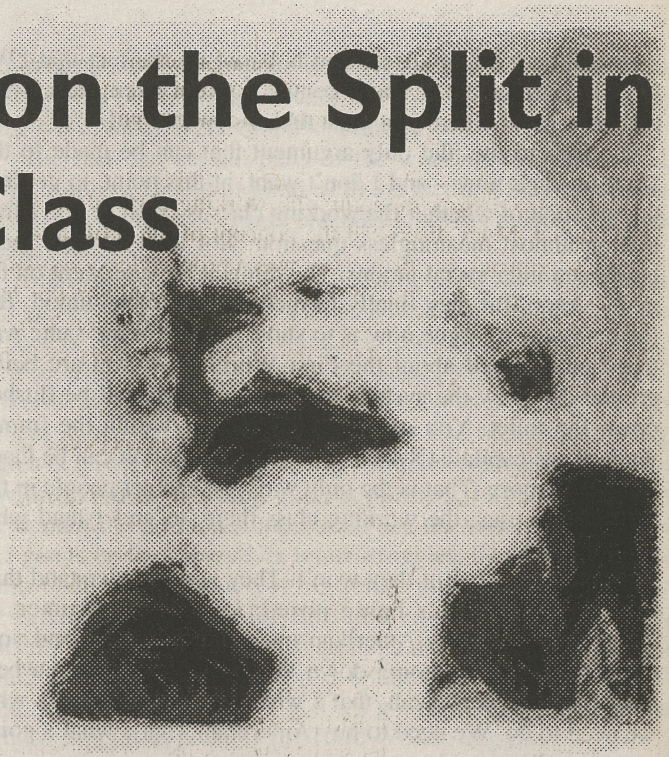
Marx & Engels on the Split in The Working Class

by a comrade



Among those throughout the world who call themselves Marxists, a debate is raging with increasing ferocity. The debate is of particular relevance to the self-described Marxists of the imperialist (First World) countries. At issue is the extent to which imperialist-country workers can be expected to line up on the side of revolutionary or progressive social change, and the extent to which they can be expected to line up on the side of reaction. Lenin described the existence of a "split in the socialist movement," with a basis in a "split in the working class," and self-described Marxists today struggle over the question of exactly where the faultlines of this split can be found.

The position taken by the majority of First World "leftists," including non-Marxists and phony Marxists (revisionists), is that the vast majority of imperialist-country workers have a direct material interest in revolution. MIM holds the minority view: that only a minority of imperialist-country workers have a direct material interest in revolution. This essay does not aim to resolve this dispute or many of its component questions. Nor does it discuss the related questions pertaining to the revolutionary potential of the national liberation struggles or other struggles of the nationally oppressed. Instead, this essay seeks to illustrate that there is a basis for our view in the works of Marx and Engels. Understanding this point is important, but it is no substitute for studying today's material conditions. Nor is it a substitute for applying one's rational knowledge in social practice. We recommend out MIM Theory 1 ("A White Proletariat?", and MIM Theory 10 ("Coming to Grips with the Labor Aristocracy") for more of MIM's work on this subject.

Marx and Engels, 1844-1846

Although Karl Marx was born in 1818, *Marxism* in some ways was born in 1844. In 1859, Marx reflected:

> "The first work which I undertook for a solution of the doubts which assailed me was a critical review of the Hegelian philosophy of law, a work the introduction to which appeared in 1844 in the *Deutsch-franzosische Jahrbucher*, published in Paris. My investigation led to the result that legal relations such as forms of state are to be grasped neither from themselves nor from the so-called general development of the human mind, but rather have their roots in the material conditions of life, the sum total of which Hegel, following the example of the Englishmen and Frenchmen of the eighteenth century, combines under the name of 'civil society,' that however the anatomy of civil society is to be sought in political economy."(1)

So by 1844, the basic premises of Marxism were in place. First and foremost, in 1844's *Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right*, Marx advocates and practices a materialist methodology, not a dogmatic approach to questions. This is the essence of Marxism. To be a Marxist, one must base one's theories on the investigation of material reality, not on inherited dogma. Here in 1844, Marx wrote, "Material force must be overthrown by material force."(2) It was only with this basis of materialism that Marx was able to begin discussing the proletariat.

Due to the influence of dogmatism, much of it in the guise of "Marxism," the word "proletariat" is widely *mis*understood to be synonymous with "industrial working class." In fact, these terms are only synonymous in some times and places, as well as in common parlance. The term *proletariat* has its origins in the pre-industrial society of Ancient Rome, where it was used to refer to the propertyless class constituting the lowest class of citizens.(3) This is why in 1846, Marx and Engels were able to talk about a proletariat outside an industrial context:

> "With the development of private property, we find here for the first time the same conditions which we shall find again, only on a more extensive scale, with modern private property. On the one hand the concentration of private property, which began very early in Rome (as the Licinian agrarian law proves), and proceeded very rapidly from the time of the civil wars and especially under the Emperors; on the other hand, coupled with this, the transformation of the ple-

beian small peasantry into a proletariat, which, however, owing to its intermediate position between propertied citizens and slaves, never achieved an independent development."(4)

Before discussing the industrial working-class of his day as proletarian, Marx discussed the concept of the proletariat. For Marx's purposes, the proletariat was a propertyless class which could serve as a revolutionary vehicle. It was only on this basis and the basis of his understanding of the material conditions of his day that Marx decided that the industrial workers were proletarian. In 1844, Marx wrote:

> "Where, then, is the *positive* possibility of emancipation in Germany?
>
> "*Answer*: In the formation of a class with *radical chains*, a class in civil society which is not a class of civil society, a class which is the dissolution of all classes, a sphere of society which has a universal character because its sufferings are universal, and which does not claim a *particular redress* because the wrong which is done to in is not *a particular wrong* but *wrong as such*. There must be formed a sphere of society which claims no *traditional* title but only a human title, which is not partially opposed to the consequences but is totally opposed to the assumptions of the German political system; a sphere, finally, which cannot emancipate itself without emancipating itself from all the other spheres of society and thereby emancipating all other spheres of society, and thereby emancipating all of them; a sphere, in short, which is the *total loss* of humanity and which can only redeem itself by a *total redemption of humanity*. This dissolution of society, as a particular class, is the *proletariat*.
>
> "Only the intrusion of industrial development is beginning to create a proletariat in Germany. For the proletariat is not being formed by a *natural growth* of poverty, but by *artificially produced* poverty. It does not consist of the masses of men mechanically oppressed by the weight of society, but of the masses that result from the *acute disintegration* of society, and particularly of the middle-class – though gradually, needless to say, naturally conditioned poverty and Christian-Germanic serfdom will enter the proletariat's ranks."(5)

Also in 1844, Marx wrote that "the whole of society must fall apart into two classes – those of property *owners* and of propertyless *workers*."(6) Here we see Marx drawing the fault-lines of the class struggle much differently than they are drawn by today's imperialist-country "leftists," who (usually) do not have the gall to claim that the imperialist-country workers they champion are "propertyless."

Marx and Engels, 1848

In 1848, Marx and Engels completed the *Manifesto of the Communist Party*, which stated:

> "Modern bourgeois society with its relations of production, of exchange and of property, a society with its relations of production, of exchange and of property, a society that has conjured up such a gigantic means of production and of exchange, is like the sorcerer who is no longer able to control the powers of the nether world whom he has called up by his spells. For many a decade past the history of industry and commerce is but the history of the revolt of modern productive forces against modern conditions of production, against the property relations that are the conditions for the existence of the bourgeoisie and of its rule. ...
>
> "The weapons with which the bourgeoisie felled feudalism to the ground are now turned against the bourgeoisie itself.
>
> "But not only has the bourgeoisie forged the weapons that bring death to itself; it has also called into existence the men who are to wield those weapons – the modern working class – the proletarians."(7)

Here we see that the proletarians are understood to be those who wield the rising productive forces against capitalist production relations, and thus against bourgeois rule. In other words, the proletariat, the class whose power is rising according to Marx and Engels, is the class which works the productive forces and therefore has the social power to wield these forces as a weapon. To demonstrate that today's imperialist country workers are mostly proletarian, one must demonstrate that these workers are engaged in productive work, work in which they wield the productive forces. This cannot be demonstrated, because it is not true. The majority of imperialist-country workers are not production workers. The proletariat, which feeds and supplies imperialist-country residents, is concentrated outside of the imperialist countries' borders. This is the proletariat which is the rising force of the new socialist order.

Marx and Engels continued: "In proportion as the bourgeoisie, i.e., capital, is developed, in the same proportion is the proletariat, the modern working class, developed – a class of laborers, who live only so long as they find work, and who find work only so long as their labour increases capital."(8)

The working classes of the imperialist countries do not, as a whole, meet this definition of proletarian. As has been shown elsewhere, the labor of the majority of First World workers does not increase capital. Imperialist country workers are in fact paid more than the value of their labor.

Furthermore, the Manifesto repeatedly describes the proletarian as propertyless:

> "The proletarian is without property. ... They have nothing of their own to secure and fortify; their mission is to destroy all previous securities for, and insurances of, individual property. ... But does wage-labour create any property for the labourer? Not a bit. ... What, therefore, the wage-labourer appropriates by means of his labour, merely suffices to prolong and reproduce a bare existence. ... You are horrified at our intending to do away with private property. But in your existing society, private property is already done away with for nine-tenths of the population; its existence for the few is solely due to its non-existence in the

> hands of those nine-tenths. You reproach us, therefore, with intending to do away with a form of property, the necessary condition for whose existence is the non-existence of any property for the immense majority of society. ... The proletarians have nothing to lose but their chains." (9)

Note also that peasants were considered to be materially better-off than workers in Europe in 1848. Excluding the lumpen proletariat, which is apparently so disunited as to not be considered a stratum by Marx and Engels, "The proletariat [is] the lowest stratum of our present society."(10) At the time, the peasantry was an "intermediate class" like the petit-bourgeoisie, between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat:

> "In countries like France, where the peasants constitute far more than half of the population, it was natural that writers who sided with the proletariat against the bourgeoisie, should use, in their criticism of the bourgeois *regime*, the standard of the petty bourgeois, and from the standpoint of these intermediate classes should take up the cudgels for the working class."(11)

The fact that peasants and workers have switched place on the capitalist totem pole should serve to caution would-be dogmatists against treating these class categories as though they were frozen in time since 1848. The industrial working-class that Marx and Engels championed in 1848 was the most oppressed group (other than the scattered lumpen elements).

Today's social-chauvinists accuse those who do not join them in championing imperialist country workers of "writing off the proletariat." We have already seen how these critics are wrong that the group in question is part of the proletariat. What is also wrong with this accusation is its demagoguery. The implication is that the socialist appeal is classless, and that no group should be "written off." In contrast, Marx and Engels wrote:

> "The [Utopian] Socialist and Communist systems properly so called, those of Saint-Simon, Fourier, Owen and others, spring into existence in the early undeveloped period. ... The undeveloped state of the class struggle, as well as their own surroundings, causes Socialists of this kind to consider themselves far superior to all class antagonisms. They want to improve the condition of every member of society, even that of the most favoured. Hence, they habitually appeal to society at large, without distinction of class; nay, by preference, to the ruling class. For how can people, when once they understand their [the Utopians'] system, fail to see in it the best possible state of society?"(12)

In other words, the socialist appeal as understood by Marx and Engels is not aimed equally at all ears. For Marxists, there should be no question that their appeal is only aimed at certain classes. Although some individuals will defect from reactionary classes to join the socialist struggle, and although members of all classes will see benefits from socialism in the long-term, the socialist struggle is not a classless "people's" struggle. The real question is not whether some groups of people should be "written off" in the sense of not being treated as a revolutionary vehicle, but which groups belong in which category. Once we have shaken off the demagoguery, we can return to the question of where to find the faultlines.

Marx and Engels, 1850-1883

The phrase "labor aristocracy" is generally associated with Lenin, as is the associated concept of the "split in the working class." Both have a basis, however, in Marx and Engels, who in October 1850 noted that the Chartist movement had split into two factions, one revolutionary, to which "the mass of workers living in real proletarian conditions belong," the other reformist, comprising "the petty-bourgeois members and the labour aristocracy."(13)

As this split developed, Marx and Engels continued to keep apprised of it. On Oct. 7, 1858, in a letter to Marx, Engels wrote:

> "The English proletariat is actually becoming more and more bourgeois, so that this most bourgeois of all nations is apparently aiming ultimately at the possession of a bourgeois aristocracy and a bourgeois proletariat *alongside* the bourgeoisie. For a nation which exploits the whole world this is of course to a certain extent justifiable."(14)

In 1859, Marx wrote of "the United States of North America, where, though classes already exist, they have not yet become fixed, but continually change and interchange their elements in constant flux."(15) In June 1865, Marx followed up on this point. He wrote:

> "Hence the relatively high standard of wages in the United States. Capital may there try its utmost. It cannot prevent the labor market from being continuously emptied by the continuous conversion of wages laborers into independent, self-sustaining peasants. The position of wages laborer is for a very large part of the American people but a probational state, which they are sure to leave within a shorter or longer term." (16)

On Sept. 21, 1872, Engels wrote that "the English labour leaders had sold themselves."(17) On Aug. 4, 1874, Marx concurred: "As to the urban workers here [in England], it is a pity that the whole pack of leaders did not get into Parliament. This would be the surest way of getting rid of the whole lot."(18) Continuing on the same theme, on Aug. 11, 1881, Engels wrote about "those very worst English trade unions which allow themselves to be led by men sold to, or at least paid by, the bourgeoisie."(19) Many of today's social-chauvinists stop there, as though the faultlines in the split in the working class had not budged a bit since 1881. These opportunists rail against "labor misleaders," and fail to acknowledge even the possibility that an imperialist country's working class, and not just a handful of its leaders, could be bribed by the bourgeoisie

of its country.

On Sept. 12, 1882, however, Engels went further:

> "You ask me what the English workers think about colonial policy. Well, exactly the same as they think about politics in general. There is no workers' party here, there are only Conservatives and Liberal-Radicals, and the workers gaily share in the feast of England's monopoly of the world market and the colonies."(20)

On March 14, 1883, Karl Marx died, leaving the leadership of the struggle against social-chauvinism in the able hands of Engels.

Engels and posthumous Marx, 1891-1895

On 14 September 1891, Engels referred to the existence in England of a "*bourgeois labour party*."(21) In 1892, he referred to an "aristocracy among the working class" and spoke of a "privileged minority of the workers." "A small, privileged, protected minority ... permanently benefited" from England's privileged position in 1848-1868, while "the great bulk of them experienced at best but a temporary improvement. ... With the break-down of that [England's industrial] monopoly, the English working class will lose that privileged position. "(22) Engels's prediction here turned out to be incorrect. The labor aristocracy in England and worldwide has only grown since 1892. While Engels can be forgiven for erring on the side of wishful thinking in 1892, the same cannot be said for those lazy dogmatists who have made the same error every year since.

Besides which, predictions are one thing. Unlike the lazy dogmatists and social-chauvinists, Engels was astute at observing the world around him, even when it meant criticizing a country's workers. Also in 1892, he wrote:

> "The truth is this: during the period of England's industrial monopoly, the English working class have, to a certain extent, shared in the benefits of monopoly. These benefits were very unequally parceled out amongst them; the privileged minority pocketed most, but even the greatest mass had, at least, a temporary share now and then. And that is the reason why, since the dying out of Owenism, there has been no socialism in England."(23)

Finally, in 1894, Engels released his edition of volume three of Marx's *Capital*, which addressed the basis of the labor aristocracy's existence and rise (though the connection between the labor aristocracy and its basis was not clearly spelled out until Lenin's time):

> "He thus secures a surplus-profit. As concerns capitals invested in colonies, etc., on the other hand, they may yield higher rates of profit for the simple reason that the rate of profit is higher there due to backward development, and likewise the exploitation of labour, because of the use of slaves, coolies, etc."(24)

In the next year, 1895, Frederick Engels died, leaving V. I. Lenin and others to continue the struggle against the labor aristocracy.

Conclusion

In conclusion, those who champion the corrupted working classes of today's imperialist countries while wearing a "Marxist" guise are not Marxists. To be consistent with the teaching of Marx and Engels, the social-chauvinists must prove that the classes they call "proletarian" are propertyless, that they are exploited (meaning they are paid less than the value of their labor), and that they engage in productive labor. Such an argument is untenable, but if the social-chauvinists wish to claim Marxism for their ideas, they must make it. Furthermore, they must base their argument not on dogma, but on the application of the Marxist materialist method to today's concrete realities. They must take note of where Marx and Engels drew the faultlines of the split in the working class, including what Marx and Engels said specifically about England and North America, and explain to what degree they think the labor aristocracy has grown or shrunk since then, and what the material basis or bases for such changes has been. Should they find their own positions to be untenable, the opportunists can either abandon their opportunism for genuine Marxism or abandon their false claim to Marxism.

Notes:

1. Marx, *Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*, Preface, in Eugene Kamenka, Ed., *The Portable Karl Marx*, Penguin Books: New York, 1983, p. 159.
2. Marx, *Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right*, in *The Portable Karl Marx*, op. cit., p. 119.
3. *American Heritage Electronic Dictionary*, Third Edition, 1993.
4. Marx and Engels, *The German Ideology*, in *The Portable Karl Marx*, op. cit., p. 166.
5. Marx, *Critique of Hegel*, op. cit., p. 123.
6. Marx, *Economico-Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844*, in *The Portable Karl Marx*, op. cit., p. 131.
7. Marx and Engels, *Manifesto of the Communist Party*, Foreign Languages Press: Beijing, 1975, pp. 39-41.
8. Ibid., p. 41.
9. Ibid., pp. 46-47, 51-53, 77.
10. Ibid., p. 47.
11. Ibid., pp. 64-65.
12. Ibid., pp. 72-73.
13. "Politisch-okonomische Revue," Neue Rheinische Zeitung, cited in *A Dictionary of Marxist Thought*, Tom Bottomore, ed., Harvard University Press: Cambridge, Mass., 1983, p. 265.
14. V. I. Lenin, "Imperialism and the Split in Socialism," 1916, *V. I. Lenin Collected Works, Volume 23*, Progress Publishers: Moscow, 1974, p. 112.
15. Marx, *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, in *Karl Marx and Frederick Engels Selected Works in One Volume*, International Publishers: New York, 1969, p. 104.
16. Marx, *Wages, Price and Profit*, Foreign Languages Press: Beijing, 1970, pp. 74-75.
17. V. I. Lenin, "Imperialism and the Split in Socialism," op. cit., p. 112.
18. Ibid.
19. Ibid.
20. Ibid.
21. Ibid., p. 113, italics Engels's.
22. *The Condition of the Working Class in England*, cited in Ibid.
23. Martin Nicolaus, "Theory of the Labor Aristocracy," in Paul Sweezy and Harry Magdoff, eds., *Lenin Today*, Monthly Review Press, New York, 1970, pp. 92-93.
24. Marx, *Capital Vol. III.*, Progress Publishers: Moscow, 1959, p. 238.

Historical Review

The FBI's War on the Black Panther Party's Southern California Chapter

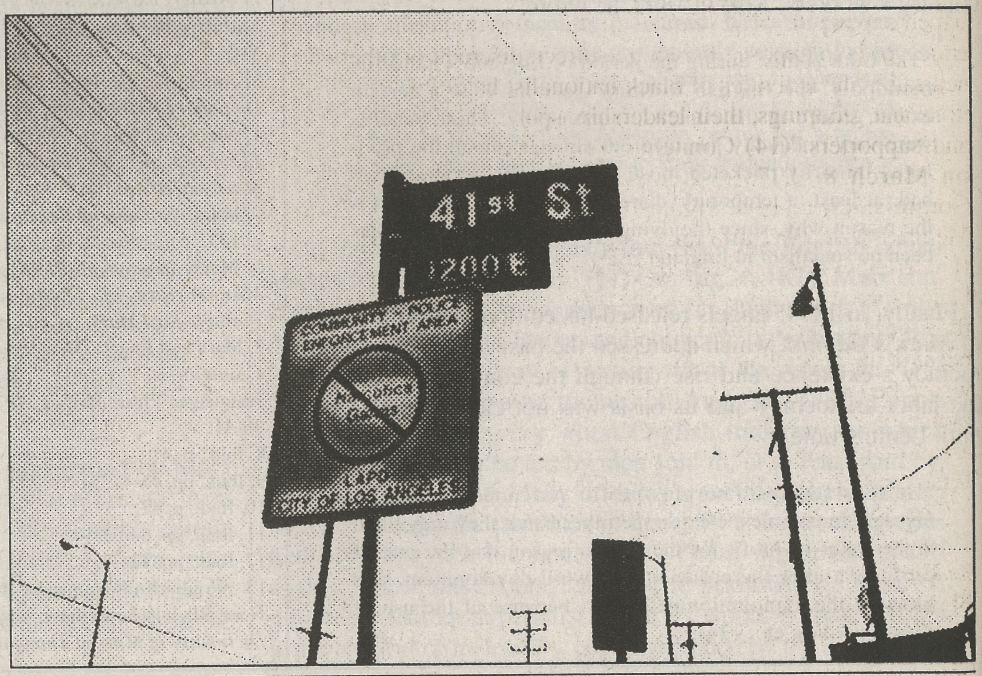
The Black Panther Party (BPP) of the 1960s is remembered clearly by both its friends and its enemies. Both remember it as an organization that popularized the ideas of socialism and armed revolution in North America, particularly among Black people. Its friends also remember it for the challenges it posed to police brutality, hunger, disease, ignorance, and the oppression of Black people generally.(1) This article is not about these successes, however. Nor will it cover the exact course of either the West Coast BPP's degeneration – from its original revolutionary positions to its later reformist positions – or the ultraleft turn of the East Coast BPP (which became the Black Liberation Army). Instead, after providing some background, it will focus on the state repression of the Southern California chapter of the BPP. The reader should remember that the repression that the BPP faced in Southern California was only a fraction of the repression the entire Party faced.(2) The fact is that the U.S. government engaged in deceit, sabotage, and murder to crush and silence its political opponents. This is crucial to understand, because it strikes at the heart of the U.S. government's myths about itself regarding free speech, human rights, liberty and justice.

The BPP's fall from its position as "the greatest threat to the internal security of the country" preceded its formal dissolution in the early 1980s.(3) It is perhaps impossible to pinpoint an exact moment at which the BPP abandoned its earlier positions, but clearly this degeneration took place. For instance, BPP founder and leader Huey Newton had once been clear in condemning liberal politicians:

"I don't believe that under the present system, under capitalism, that they will be able to solve these problems [of housing, unemployment, self-determination, justice, and imperialism]. I don't think Black people should be fooled by their come-ons, because everyone who gets in office promises the same thing. They promise full employment and decent housing; the Great Society, the New Frontier. All of these names, but no real benefits. ... Black people are tired of being deceived and duped. The people must have full control of the means of production."(4)

But by November 1974, Jerry Brown was elected governor of California with the help of a BPP endorsement.(5) Newton's former comrade, Geronimo Pratt, languished in a California jail cell on false charges throughout Brown's tenure as governor.(6) Nonetheless, in 1976, the BPP, under Elaine Brown's acting leadership, supported Jerry Brown for President.(7) Whereas BPP Chairperson Bobby Seale had been brought to trial – bound and gagged for his participation in the demonstrations against the Democratic National Convention in Chicago in 1968, in 1976 – Elaine Brown served as a delegate to the

No gangs? The BPP's former neighborhood in L.A., now patroled by the "anti-gang" gang: LAPD



Democratic National Convention.(8) Former Panthers Kit Kim Holder and Safiya Bukhari suggest that the 1970-1971 split of the BPP into an Oakland faction under Newton's leadership and a New York faction under Eldridge Cleaver's initial leadership marked the degeneration of the BPP. Says Holder, "both factions ... began to overemphasize either the mass organizational or military aspect of the struggle."(9) While not the only factor, state repression was key in bringing about this destruction of the BPP.

Origins and Infiltrators

The Black Panther Party was formed in Oakland, Cal. in October 1966 by Huey Newton and Bobby Seale, principally Huey Newton. Newton and his party had already made names for themselves by the time Newton was arrested on Oct. 28, 1967, for allegedly killing a police officer in self-defense. In response to this arrest, Earl Anthony of the BPP Central Committee moved to Los Angeles in November 1967 to raise support for the Huey P. Newton Legal Defense Fund.(10) This marked the start of Panther activity in Southern California. It marked the start of covert anti-Panther activity in Southern California as well. By his account, Anthony had agreed four months prior to become "an FBI informant-agent-provocateur inside the Black Panther Party."(11)

Furthermore, 1967 was also when the FBI's Richard Wallace Held "was assigned to the Bureau's Los Angeles field office, as a specialist in 'black extremist' matters and head of the local Cointelpro section."(12) Cointelpro, FBI short for "counterintelligence program," was first launched in 1956 against the Communist Party, USA (CPUSA). The Cointelpro against Black nationalists began in 1967, with the BPP as its main target.(13) On Aug. 25, 1967, FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover wrote an internal memorandum to all FBI offices which explained: "The purpose of this new counterintelligence endeavor is to expose, disrupt, misdirect, discredit or otherwise neutralize the activities of black nationalist hate-type organizations and groupings, their leadership, spokesmen, membership, and supporters."(14) Cointelpro first became publicly known on March 8, 1971, when a group called the Citizens Commission to Investigate the FBI broke into the FBI's Media, Penn. office and removed thousands of pages of classified files.(15) Exposed, the state officially discontinued Cointelpro. In reality, however, the code name changed, but the operations continued.(16) For instance, Richard Held became the special agent in charge of the San Francisco office, where he may have been responsible for operations against the radical environmentalist group Earth First!, including a failed assassination attempt on and subsequent arrest of two Earth First! activists on May 24, 1990.(17)

The Southern California chapter of the BPP was formed in 1968 by Alprentice "Bunchy" Carter. Carter was the former head of the 5,000-strong Slauson gang and its 'hardcore,' the Slauson Renegades, and was therefore known as "the Mayor of the Ghetto." While spending four years in Soledad prison for armed robbery, he became a Muslim and a follower of Malcolm X. In 1967, Carter met BPP Minister of Defense Huey Newton and became a Panther on the spot. Carter formed and headed the Southern California chapter, taking position of Deputy Minister of Defense, announced in early 1968. (18)

Among the best-known members of the Southern California chapter besides Carter were Elaine Brown, Raymond "Masai" Hewitt, Vietnam veteran Elmer "Geronimo" Pratt, Ericka Huggins, Angela Davis, and Captain (later Chairperson) John Huggins. Huggins, who had served in Vietnam, became the number-two-ranking member of the chapter. Davis joined briefly before being recruited away by the CPUSA. (19) In accordance with party-wide requirements, chapter members were required to attend political education classes regularly, read certain books including Marx, Ché, and *Quotations from Chairman Mao* (the "Red Book"), memorize and follow the rules of discipline, memorize the BPP program and platform, learn to use firearms (training was conducted in the Mojave desert), and learn to perform emergency medical techniques.(20) By April 1968, the Southern California chapter gained 50-100 new members each week, though not all stayed.(21)

Attacks on the Party

As the chapter grew, so did the attacks against it. These initially took the form of random raids of party offices and homes and random arrests of Party members. On April 5, 1968, a day after Martin Luther King Jr.'s assassination, San Diego police crashed down the door of Ken Denman, a Peace and Freedom Party leader and Panther organizer in San Diego – without a warrant.(22) On Aug. 5, 1968, police killed BPP Captains Little Tommy Lewis, Steve Bartholomew, and Robert Lawrence at Adams Boulevard and Montclair in Watts.(23) On Jan. 1, 1969, Captain Franco (Frank Diggs), the reputed leader of the BPP's local underground apparatus, was shot dead in an alley in Long Beach.(24) In 1969, the Los Angeles Police Department's (LAPD) vice squad was transformed into its "metro squad." The metro squad was the LAPD's Panther unit, an "urban counterinsurgency task force."(25) In April 1969, hundreds of Panthers were meeting on the second floor of the BPP's Southern California chapter's headquarters at 4115 S. Central Avenue in Los Angeles. Hundreds of LAPD officers from the Newton Street Division surrounded the building. The chapter's leader at the time, Geronimo Pratt, turned off the lights and armed and organized the Panthers to defend themselves. Panthers Joan Kelley and Elaine Brown contacted the news media, ultimately prompting the LAPD to withdraw.(26) On May 1, 1969, the LAPD raided the L.A. BPP office. Nine Panthers were arrested in the raid, and two other L.A. Panthers were arrested the same day.(27) During a two-week period around this time, the LAPD made 56 arrests of 42 Panthers. (28) On June 16, 1969, the San Diego Police Department raided the San Diego Panthers' office at 2608 Imperial Avenue. (29)

On Sept. 8, 1969, armed police raided the Watts breakfast program.(30) This raid accorded with an early 1969 FBI directive to "eradicate [the BPP's] serve the people programs."(31) On May 15, 1969, in an internal memo, FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover wrote: "The Breakfast for Children Program ... represents the best and most influential activity going for the BPP and, as such, is potentially the greatest threat to efforts by authorities ... to neutralize the BPP and destroy what it stands for."(32) From September to December of 1969, Southern California's Panthers were arrested on a daily basis, with most of the charges dropped within a week.(33) On Oct. 10, 1969 the LAPD had a shoot-out with some Panthers. Panther Bruce Richards was wounded and charged with attempted murder, and Panther Walter Toure Poke was killed.(34) On October 18, the L.A. BPP office was raided yet again.(35) On November 22, the San Diego BPP office was raided. All seven Panthers present were arrested. (36)

Most dramatically, on December 8, the LAPD deployed its new SWAT (Special Weapons and Tactics, a militarized police unit) teams, a warrant, a battering ram, helicopters, a tank, trucks, dynamite, and 400 police officers to raid three L.A. BPP facilities including the Central Ave. headquarters.(37) The raid bore much similarity to the raid against the Chicago BPP led four days prior by the FBI and Chicago police.(38) For instance, the government's plan called for the police to focus gunfire at chapter leader Geronimo Pratt's bed; however, Pratt was sleeping on the floor at the time.(39) But whereas the Chicago raid ended with Panthers Fred Hampton and Mark Clark murdered, the L.A. Panthers, under Geronimo Pratt's leadership, stood their ground. Only after exchanging fire with the police for five hours did the Panthers surrender, alive.(40) Participant Melvin Cotton Smith, security officer for the L.A. branch, was later identified by former government agent Louis Tackwood as a police informant.(41) Louis Tackwood, too, was a government infiltrator of the Southern California BPP.(42) Cotton provided the LAPD and FBI with detailed blueprints of party facilities before the raid. (43) The LAPD's warrant was obtained on the basis of false information provided by the FBI regarding stolen military weapons. The day after the raid, Angela Davis and others set up a vigil outside BPP's Southern California headquarters, during which LAPD attacked, forcing people to flee in all directions.(44)

The attacks on the rank and file continued. On Nov. 4, 1970, the LAPD raided the L.A. BPP's child care center, rounded up children, and held guns on them while officers beat up an adult Panther. Police claimed to be responding to a landlord complaint of children in the building.(45)

The rank and file of the BPP were not the only targets of Cointelpro-BPP. Special attention was given to the leadership. In Southern California, the FBI success in "neutralizing" the BPP was largely attributable to its success in neutralizing two layers of local leadership: first Bunchy Carter and John Huggins, who were killed, then Geronimo Pratt, who remains in jail today on bogus charges.

Hoover's Agenda

In late 1968, Hoover openly announced that the BPP was, in his opinion, "the greatest threat to the internal security of the country."(46) Cointelpro was massively expanded. In November 1968, Hoover ordered FBI offices "to exploit all avenues of creating ... dissension within the ranks of the BPP" and encouraged agents to "submit imaginative and hard-hitting counterintelligence measures aimed at crippling the BPP." (47)

In this context, the Los Angeles office of the FBI set the stage for the Jan. 17, 1969, "neutralization" by murder of the L.A. BPP's top two leaders, Bunchy Carter and John Huggins at UCLA's Campbell Hall. Because local Cointelpro head Richard W. Held took credit for the killings, there is no question that the FBI was responsible. Carter and Huggins' apparent killer was Claude "Chuchessa" Hubert, although George and Larry Stiner were arrested for the crime. All three were members of the cultural nationalist US organization led by Ron "Maulana" Karenga. It is unclear whether Hubert, the Stiners, and Karenga were knowing agents of FBI-Cointelpro, accidental agents, or some combination of the two.

Congressional investigators of Cointelpro put forward the most conservative plausible argument. Huey Newton summed up this argument: "The impression given from official investigations is that the FBI merely took advantage of an existing state of 'gang warfare' between the two organizations. This was supposedly accomplished by the sending of false death threats and derogatory cartoons in the name of one organization to another."(48) It is true that local Cointelpro head Richard W. Held "devised and released a series of cartoons and forged in the names of the Panthers and a nationalist organization known as United Slaves (US), in which the rival groups appeared to be viciously and publicly ridiculing one another."(49) And there were genuine differences between the two groups. The Panthers were Marxist-Leninist revolutionaries, while US was cultural nationalist.(50) US was highly patriarchal, while the Los Angeles Panthers were anti-sexist (though it is true that other BPP chapters were more like US in this regard).(51) Concretely, the two organizations competed for recruits. This rivalry grew as the two organizations found themselves competing on the same turf – UCLA.

In September 1968, Bunchy Carter, John Huggins, Geronimo Pratt and Elaine Brown all registered as students in UCLA's High Potential Program.(52) Huggins seized the opportunity to become a student organizer.(53) On Nov. 25, 1968, J. Edgar Hoover told 14 FBI field offices that "an aura of gang warfare with attendant threats of murder and reprisals" existed between the BPP and the US organization and said they should exploit the situation.(54)

UCLA Killings

Around this time, US leader Ron Karenga had suggested Dr. Charles Thomas as head of a proposed Black Studies program at UCLA. UCLA Chancellor Charles Young authorized funding for Karenga's program. The rank and file of the Black

Student Union (BSU) were upset at having been uninvolved in the decision-making process. They called a meeting. Fearing the US organization, the BSU asked the BPP to act as security for the meeting. The BPP refused to take sides, but agreed to back up the BSU's majority decision regarding the program. On January 15, the BSU voted against Karenga's program.(55) At a follow-up meeting two days later, Carter and Huggins were shot and killed. (56)

> "[Local Cointelpro head Richard] Held quickly took 'credit' for the killings [of Carter and Huggins], and recommended sending more cartoons. This was duly approved and resulted in the wounding of several more Panthers and the death of yet another, Sylvester Bell. In the aftermath, Held again patted himself on the back for such 'success' via internal memoranda."(57)

In 1969, Panther Ronald Freeman was shot by US organization members while selling BPP newspapers.(58) BPP member John Savage was killed by US members in San Diego on May 23. The BPP claimed that Savage had witnessed the Carter and Huggins murders and was killed to prevent him from testifying at the US members' trial.(59) In all, four Panthers were shot and one wounded by US members in 1969.(60)

The theory outlined above suggests that genuine rivalries between two genuine organizations were exacerbated by the FBI to create war between them. On the other end of the spectrum of plausible theories, some suggest that the US organization was not a genuine part of the Black power movement at all, but was in fact an anti-Panther death squad financed by the FBI. Elaine Brown suggests that she believes this was the case, at least after the Campbell Hall killings.(61) Former FBI infiltrator and agent-provocateur Earl Anthony alleges that he knows this to be true:

> "When I met with [FBI Agents Robert] O'Connor and [Ron] Kizenski at our designated time [Aug. 6, 1968],...[t]hey said they were tired of the 'Panther shit,' and the FBI had worked out a deal with Karenga where they would supply US with weapons and a master plan to destroy the LA Black Panther Party: and they were hoping to get something like that going in New York."(62)

Anthony's words have proven in the past to be untrustworthy, so this allegation is not worth very much. It is quite possible that he is continuing to spread slanderous disinformation on behalf of the FBI.

What gives some credence, though not proof, to the theory held by Brown and Anthony is that while the more conservative theory holds that the FBI was using each group against the other, the repression faced by the BPP was much more severe than that faced by the US organization. The pattern of killings described above is a case in point. Another is that the FBI opened a conspiracy investigation for Panther Geronimo Pratt for a bank robbery that the FBI knew had been committed by US members.(63)

Another example of police favoritism towards US is the initial police response to the killings of Carter and Huggins, which was not to go after the US organization or any other suspects in the murder, but instead to deploy over 150 police officers to raid a Panther apartment and arrest 75 Panthers, including the remaining Panther leadership, on charges of intending to murder US members in retaliation!(64) Later, the police arrested US's Stiner brothers, Larry and George. The Stiners were given life terms and sent to San Quentin, but, adding to suspicions that US members were deliberately given light treatment, they "walked away from a minimum security area on March 30, 1974."(65) Larry Stiner turned himself in on Feb. 5, 1994, while George Stiner remained a fugitive.(66)

FBI KILLERS?

Another theory holds that, whatever the role of the US organization as a whole, those who shot Carter and Huggins were knowing FBI agents. This theory, put forward by Huey Newton, relies on the testimony of a Black former FBI informant named D'Arthard Perry, also known as Ed Riggs and, according to him, the FBI code name "Othello."(67) Perry claims he reported directly to L.A. FBI agents Brandon Cleary, Will Heaton, and Michael Quinn.(68) Perry's testimony is more plausible than Anthony's (although it is possible that both are true), and is worth quoting at length:

> "Shortly after my arrival in the parking lot I heard shots from the direction of Campbell Hall.
>
> "Within a few minutes I observed George Stiner, Larry Stiner, and Claude Hubert also known as Chuchessa, jump into a 1967 or 1968 light tan or white, four-door Chevrolet driven by Brandon Cleary of the Federal Bureau of Investigation. I saw this car drive away from the parking lot of Campbell Hall. I left the campus on foot and immediately went to FBI headquarters by bus. I inquired as to the whereabouts of Brandon Cleary at this time, and, was told he was not available. I am informed and believe that the four-door Chevrolet described above was the property of a man called 'Jomo,' a known member of the US organization, now deceased.
>
> "I recognized George Stiner, Larry Stiner, and Claude Hubert from seeing them prior to this date on the 14th floor of the Federal Bureau of Investigation building on several occasions in the company of Brandon Cleary, the man I had seen drive them away from the Campbell Hall area.
>
> "I had been told to give a report within twenty-four hours of the incident to my supervising agent, Will Heaton, on the 14th floor of the Wilshire Blvd. Federal Investigation building.
>
> "A few hours later, I went to the building and met with my supervising agent, Will Heaton. While in his company, I observed George Stiner, Larry Stiner, and Claude Hubert in the company of Brandon Cleary on the 14th floor of the Federal Bureau of Investigation building. I asked Cleary, 'what was happening' and was told that there had been a 'fuck up' – no one was to be killed by 'our' people. I also

learned that the car that had been driven by Cleary was taken from the place Jomo Shambulia had parked it and returned to the same parking space after the incident. I also learned that it was Claude Hubert who fired the shot that killed John Jerome Huggins and the same Claude Hubert who fired the shot that killed Alprentice 'Bunchy' Carter and not George or Larry Stiner.

"Through information and belief, I have knowledge that George Stiner and Larry Stiner were Intelligence Gatherers for the Federal Bureau of Investigation and were working for Brandon Cleary and others when John Jerome Huggins and Alprentice 'Bunchy' Carter were murdered. I am informed and believe that Claude Hubert was on January 17, 1969 at the time he reportedly executed John Jerome Huggins and Alprentice 'Bunchy' Carter, an agent in the service of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, Los Angeles office. I am further informed that this same Claude Hubert was subsequently transferred to an east coast office of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, specifically New York, New York."(69)

White former FBI agent M. Wesley Swearingen relates a similar account:

"Soon after I had been assigned to the Los Angeles racial squad, I was told by a fellow agent ... that another agent on the squad ... had arranged for [his] informers in the United Slaves to assassinate Alprentice Carter ... and John Huggins. ... Following [the agent's] instructions, informants George Stiner and Larry Stiner shot them to death on the UCLA campus on January 17, 1969. ...

"I later reviewed the Los Angeles files and verified that the Stiner brothers were FBI informants. ... I know that D'arthard Perry was an FBI informant and that he is telling the truth about the FBI."(70)

Again, while the details are disputed, the basic fact is not. Regardless of how direct or indirect the FBI's role was in the murders of Carter and Huggins, clearly at the very least the FBI encouraged the hostilities that culminated in the murders, then claimed credit after the murders took place.

Target: Geronimo Pratt

Following these murders, Carter's former bodyguard, Elmer "Geronimo" Pratt, rose to fill the local leadership vacuum, and became the next local Cointelpro target for "neutralization."(71) As noted, LAPD officers fired at Pratt's bed during the December 1969 FBI-planned raid on L.A. Panther headquarters.(72) The FBI also took actions to isolate Pratt from the rest of the Party, leaving him vulnerable to state attack.(73) In September 1970, the LAPD's Criminal Conspiracy Section (CCS) was working to indict Pratt on false murder charges, although "according to both [former informants] Tackwood and Cotton Smith, there had been considerable controversy in CCS and the FBI over exactly *what* murder to use in preparing a case against Pratt."(74)

They arrested Pratt on Dec. 4, 1970.(75) He stood trial in the spring of 1972 at Los Angeles Superior Court on charges of murdering Caroline Olsen, a white schoolteacher, on a Santa Monica tennis court on Dec. 18, 1968.(76) The prosecution relied heavily on the testimony of LAPD and FBI informant Julius Carl "Julio" Butler, who at the trial denied being an informant.(77) Butler to this day denies that he was ever an informant, no doubt in part because such an admission would jeopardize his position as chairman of the Board of Trustees of Los Angeles' oldest and most prominent Black church, the First African Methodist Episcopal Church (First A.M.E.).(78) Pratt argued, and maintains today, that he was at a BPP meeting in Oakland, 400 miles away from Santa Monica, on the evening of the murder.(79) The FBI's success in isolating Pratt from the BPP prevented Party members, except for Kathleen Cleaver, from testifying on his behalf and corroborating his alibi.(80) Then-FBI agent Wesley Swearingen reports:

"My supervisor and several agents on the racial squad knew that Pratt was innocent because the FBI had wiretap logs proving that Pratt was in the San Francisco area several hours before the shooting of Caroline Olsen and that he was there the day after the murder.

"The Los Angeles office had a wiretap on Panther headquarters in Los Angeles for a two-week period covering the date of December 18, 1968. These wiretap logs could prove that Elmer Pratt was in the San Francisco area on the day Caroline Olsen was shot to death.

"I reviewed the Black Panther Party file that showed that the Los Angeles FBI office had had a wiretap on the Panther office at 4115 South Central Avenue from November 15, 1968 through 2:00 P.M., December 20, 1968. ... I had worked with wiretap information since 1952, and this was the first time in my twenty-five-year career that I could not find the Panther wiretap logs for the period November 15 through December 20, 1968. Someone had destroyed those logs so there would be no proof that Elmer Pratt had been in the San Francisco area on December 18, 1968.

"A wiretap by the San Francisco FBI office ... placed Pratt in the Bay area just hours before the shooting. An illegal wiretap in Oakland ... placed Pratt in Oakland the day after the murder.

"This is a total of three wiretaps known to the FBI with information that placed Pratt in the San Francisco area before, during, and after the murder of Caroline Olsen, and yet the FBI withheld this information from the court and the jury." (81)

Pratt was convicted of first degree murder on July 28, 1972.(82)

"At present, Geronimo Pratt remains in prison after nearly two decades in California, a state in which the average time served on a first degree murder conviction is 4.5 years. During a 1988 parole hearing, Los Angeles Assistant District Attorney Dianne Vianni went before the board to explain why: Pratt should not be released, she stated,

because 'he is still a revolutionary man.'"(83)

Cointelpro-BPP was not limited to attacks on BPP leaders or even members. Outside supporters, too, were subject to "neutralization."

> "Held ... also assumed a leading role in destroying the Panthers' white supporters, and is known to have written the false accusation that actress Jean Seberg, an outspoken advocate and fundraiser for the BPP, had been sexually unfaithful to her husband and was pregnant by 'a prominent Panther leader.' This bit of poison pen prose found its way into print on May 19, 1970 in the syndicated column of a 'cooperating journalist,' Carol Haber, and caused predictable complications in Seberg's marriage. The actress, whom Bureau profiles had already described as being 'mentally unstable,' became very emotionally distraught at such disinformation, suffered a spontaneous abortion, and subsequently attempted suicide on the anniversary of this event each year. After several tries, she was successful [in June 1970]. According to former agents, who were there, Held was gleeful at the 'effectiveness' of the Seberg gambit."(84)

Learn our lessons

To those who seek to emulate the BPP, it is not enough to know that the state smashed the BPP. To these activists, the important question is what the BPP could have done differently to ensure its own survival. Briefly, the internal problems of the BPP that led to its demise all have to do with a failure to adequately prepare for state repression. For instance, the short-term gains of being above-ground – having public offices and having publicly known membership – do not look worthwhile in hindsight, 40 martyrs later.(85) Flashing guns in front of news cameras popularized the BPP and made a political point asserting the right to self-defense, but it also made it easier for the FBI to paint the BPP as a dangerous group that had to be crushed by any means. The BPP could also have benefited from tighter discipline on questions of study and theoretical work, and from a greater emphasis on the importance of political theory. Finally, the BPP tolerated illegal drug use in its ranks, and Huey Newton's cocaine use in particular hastened the demise of his leadership.(86)

Repression, while not the only aspect, was a key factor in the decline of both the Black Panther Party and its Southern California chapter. Believers in the illusion that the U.S. government supports free speech, freedom of assembly, human rights, liberty, justice, and democracy – or that the government is invincible – will tend to be complicit in America's crimes, often without even knowing that the crimes exist or that they are criminal. Thus, it is of the utmost importance to build public awareness of domestic repression. Building public opinion against domestic repression is a necessary prerequisite to its eradication.

Notes:

1. On the BPP's Serve the People programs, see Elaine Brown, *A Taste of Power: A Black Woman's Story*, Doubleday, New York, 1992, p. 16, and *The Black Panther: Black Community News Service* newspaper, Berkeley, Spring 1991, pp. 20-21.
2. Ward Churchill and Jim Vander Wall, *Agents of Repression: The FBI's Secret Wars Against the Black Panther Party and the American Indian Movement*, South End Press: Boston, 1990, pp. 37-99.
3. The quote is one made publicly by FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover on 15 June 1969. See Reginald Major, *A Panther is a Black Cat*, 1971, p. 300.
4. Philip S. Foner, ed., *The Black Panthers Speak*, Da Capo Press: New York, 1995, p. 64. The remark was made while Newton was in jail (1967-1970).
5. Brown, op. cit., p. 360.
6. Churchill and Vander Wall, op. cit., pp. 77-94.
7. Brown, op. cit., p. 413.
8. Ibid., pp. 414-415.
9. Kit Kim Holder, dissertation: *The History of the Black Panther Party 1966-1972: A Curriculum Tool for Afrikan Amerikan Studies*, 1990, p. 62. Amherst College Library, Amherst, Mass.
10. Brown, op. cit., p. 113.
11. Earl Anthony, *Spitting in the Wind: The True Story Behind the Violent Legacy of the Black Panther Party* Malibu, Cal: Roundtable, 1990, p. 38.
12. Ward Churchill, *Z Magazine*, March 1989, p. 100.
13. Huey P. Newton, dissertation: *War Against the Panthers: A Study of Repression in America*, University of California Santa Cruz, June 1980, pp. 64, 65.
14. Brian Glick, *War at Home: Covert Action Against U.S. Activists and What We Can Do About It*, South End Press: Boston, 1989, p. 77.
15. Churchill and Vander Wall, op. cit., p. 39; *Washington Post*, 30 July 1971, p. 6.
16. Ward Churchill, *Z Magazine*, March 1989, p. 100; Churchill and Vander Wall, op. cit., pp. 179-381.
17. Leslie Hemstreet, *Z Magazine*, July 1990, pp. 19-26.
18. Brown, op. cit., pp. 118-124.
19. Ibid., pp. 131-132, 138, 142, 153, 291.
20. Ibid., p. 134.
21. Ibid., p. 137.
22. "An Introduction to the Black Panther Party," pamphlet, John Brown Society, Berkeley. Edited, with new material, by the Radical Education Project, Ann Arbor, Michigan, May 1969, p. 15.
23. Brown, op. cit., p. 151. Anthony, op. cit., p. 49.
24. Brown, op. cit., p. 155.
25. Ibid., p. 181.
26. Ibid., pp. 201-202.
27. *Black Panther* newspaper, 21 February 1970, p. 12.
28. Major, op. cit., p. 300.
29. *Black Panther* newspaper, 21 February 1970, p. 19.
30. Major, op. cit., p. 301.
31. Brown, op. cit., p. 181.
32. Newton, op. cit., pp. 108-109.
33. Holder, op. cit., p. 308.
34. Ibid., p. 235.
35. Major, op. cit., p. 302.
36. Ibid.
37. Brown, op. cit., pp. 204-205, 211.
38. Churchill and Vander Wall, op. cit., p. 84.
39. Holder, op. cit., p. 307.
40. Brown, op. cit., pp. 204-205, 211.
41. Holder, op. cit., pp. 52-53.
42. Ibid., p. 307.
43. Ibid.
44. Ibid., p. 306.
45. Ibid., p. 243.
46. Newton, op. cit., p. 14.
47. Holder, op. cit., p. 286.
48. Newton, op. cit., pp. 102-103.
49. Churchill, op. cit., p. 100.

Notes continue next page...

Essay: Malcolm X's Progressive Development

by a comrade

Malcolm X saw his departure from the Nation of Islam (NOI) as a progressive development. Some argue that it was really a regression, but MIM agrees with Malcolm.

As Malcolm acknowledged after his departure, the NOI was not all bad. After the Communist Party, USA (CPUSA) dropped its support for the liberation of Black national territory in North America, the NOI picked up this call. This, combined with the Muslim doctrine of self-defense, stood in powerful contrast to the liberal integrationism and pacifism that dominated the Civil Rights Movement.

But the NOI had its limitations. Despite its militant rhetoric, it was too cautious in practice. For instance, in April 1962, Elijah Muhammad stopped Malcolm from leading protests after the Los Angeles Police attacked the NOI's Los Angeles mosque and killed two NOI members. This incident illustrated Elijah Muhammad's belief in political non-involvement, which was a source of tension between him and Malcolm:

> "If I harbored any personal disappointment whatsoever, it was that privately I was convinced that our Nation of Islam could be an even greater force in the American black man's overall struggle – If we engaged in more *action*. By that, I mean I thought privately that we should have amended, or relaxed, our general non-engagement policy."(1)

This tension was at the heart of the forthcoming split between Malcolm and the Nation, as Malcolm pointed out after the split: "[O]ur disagreement had been in terms of political direction and involvement in the extra-religious struggle for human rights."(2)

The differences between Malcolm and Muhammad became public knowledge after U.S. President John F. Kennedy's assassination on Nov. 22, 1963. On December 1, Malcolm X commented that the assassination was a case of "chickens coming home to roost," and added, "Being an old farm boy myself, chickens coming home to roost never did make me sad, they've always made me glad."(3) This was too much for Muhammad, who responded by ordering Malcolm to remain silent for 90 days. NOI's official position on the assassination was one of mourning. Muhammad's concern was not with the content of what Malcolm said – which would be hard to argue with, given the Kennedy administration's record of assassinating foreign leaders – but with the fact that "[a] statement like that can make it very hard on Muslims in general."(4)

Following this incident, Malcolm began thinking of himself as others saw him – as a Black leader.(5) This was a responsible move on his part. Rather than become disillusioned with politics and political leadership generally, Malcolm saw the need to fill a leadership vacuum, and recognized his ability and responsibility to fill this role.

On March 12, 1964, Malcolm split from the NOI and announced the formation of Muslim Mosque, Inc. (MMI).

50. See for example Foner, ed., op. cit., p. 50; Brown, op. cit., p. 142.
51. Brown, op. cit., pp. 109, 189-191.
52. Ibid., p. 153.
53. Ibid.
54. *Rolling Stone*, 9 September 1976, p. 47.
55. Brown, op. cit., pp. 160-164.
56. Ibid., pp. 165-167.
57. Churchill, op. cit., p. 100.
58. Brown, op. cit., p. 184.
59. Holder, op. cit., p. 231.
60. *Rolling Stone*, op. cit., p. 47.
61. Brown, op. cit., pp. 176-177.
62. Anthony, op. cit., pp. 50-51.
63. Churchill and Vander Wall, op. cit., pp. 81, 406-407.
64. Brown, op. cit., pp. 168-170.
65. *Los Angeles Times*, 5 February 1994, p. A25.
66. Ibid.
67. Newton, op. cit., p. 104.
68. Ibid.
69. Ibid., pp. 105-107.
70. M. Wesley Swearingen, *FBI Secrets: An Agents' Exposé*, South End Press: Boston, 1995, pp. 82-83.
71. Churchill and Vander Wall, op. cit., pp. 77-94, esp. p. 79.
72. Ibid., p. 84.
73. Ibid., pp. 85-87.
74. Ibid., p. 87.
75. Ibid.
76. Ibid., p. 88.
77. Swearingen, op. cit., pp. 85-86.
78. "Past Haunts Ex-Panther in New Life," *Los Angeles Times*, 24 May 1994, p. 1.
79. Churchill and Vander Wall, op. cit., p. 88.
80. Ibid.
81. Swearingen, op. cit., pp. 86-87.
82. Churchill and Vander Wall, op. cit., p. 90.
83. Ward Churchill, *Z Magazine*, June 1990, p. 90.
84. Ward Churchill, *Z Magazine*, March 1989, p. 100.
85. In part because of the FBI-promoted factionalization of the BPP, and in part because it is not always clear who was a Panther, the exact number of BPP martyrs is disputed. Earl Anthony even claimed there were more than 338, but his credibility and motives are suspect, so his undocumented claim is not worth much (Anthony, op. cit. , pp. 23, 33-34.). Twenty are listed in *The Black Panther: Black Community News Service* newspaper, Berkeley, Spring 1991, pp. 20-21. Another ten are listed in the Summer 1991 issue of the same newspaper, pp. 14-15.
86. Brown, op. cit., p. 271.

Some say Malcolm's decision to split was an error, because Blacks in general and Black nationalists in particular need to unite. In contrast, Leninists argue that splits can be good, and that this was such a case. For an organization to succeed in winning political objectives, it must have unity around ideological and political line, not some vague unity for unity's sake.

Malcolm began thinking of Black capitalism and organized Black electoralism as strategies for Black liberation. Malcolm was suffering some illusions regarding the U.S. electoral system and capitalism. Black capitalism is progressive as part of a larger strategy for national liberation, but by itself it will only create new relations of oppression for the Black masses. For national liberation to be genuine, it must be led by a proletarian and feminist line, not by the Black national bourgeoisie. Likewise, electoral participation should not be written off as a tactic for all time, but as a strategy it will only lead to liquidation, as evidenced by the numerous left groups that liquidated themselves into Jesse Jackson's 1984 electoral campaign. Nonetheless, Malcolm's advocacy of Black capitalism and Black electoralism was a progressive development. His previous position had been advocacy of a particular religion. While electoralism can be used as a tactic, and Black capitalism can play a role in a larger nationalist strategy, religious affiliation does nothing to build a nation's power.

In March 1964, Malcolm went to Mecca. He returned to New York as a Sunni Muslim. He remained a Muslim until his death. But three months after his trip to Mecca, he announced the formation of the Organization for Afro-American Unity (OAAU), a secular Black nationalist organization. This move from faith-based organizing to secular organizing was a progressive development. Secular movements are better political vehicles than religious movements, because one's religious orientation does not necessarily determine one's political positions, and it is one's politics that need to form the basis of unity and disunity if a movement is to maintain a clear political focus. Furthermore, religion by its nature (its nature being belief in the supernatural and a preference for faith over reason) promotes an idealistic worldview, while a materialistic outlook is ideal for guiding political action. Malcolm never gave up religion, but he stopped promoting it in his speeches, and he became more of a materialist after leaving the NOI. For instance, he said:

> "Elijah Muhammad said that Allah was chastising Reginald. ... I thought truly that it was Allah doing this to my brother. ... After Elijah Muhammad himself was later accused as a very immoral man, I came to believe that it wasn't a divine chastisement upon Reginald, but the pain he felt when his own family totally rejected him for Elijah Muhammad, and this hurt made Reginald turn insanely upon Elijah Muhammad."(6)

In April 1964, the month following his return from Mecca, Malcolm gave one of his most famous speeches, "The Ballot or the Bullet." In this speech, before he formed the OAAU, Malcolm said political organizing should have a secular form:

> "I'm still a Muslim, my religion is Islam. That's my personal belief. ... Although I'm still a Muslim, I'm not here tonight to discuss my religion. I'm not here to try and change your religion. ... [I]t's time for us to submerge our differences and realize that it is best for us to see first that we have the same problem, a common problem – a problem that will make you catch hell whether you're a Baptist, or a Methodist, or a Muslim, or a nationalist. ...We're all in the same boat and we all are going to catch hell from the same man. He just happens to be a white man."(7)

The North American white left in general, and the neo-Trotskyist Socialist Workers Party (SWP) in particular, promote the fallacy that as Malcolm's politics developed, he came closer to the white left's idea of unity between Blacks and white workers, summed up by the slogan: "Black and white, unite and fight!" Considering the history of white workers' treachery toward Blacks, the NOI's belief that "the white man is the devil" is a more realistic assessment of white people as a group than is the assessment provided by the white left. But Malcolm did the NOI one better. He abandoned the theological terminology of "devil" and rejected the NOI's oversimplification without abandoning the correct essence of what the NOI said. Upon meeting non-racist whites in Saudi Arabia:

> "I first began to perceive that 'white man,' as commonly used, means complexion only secondarily; primarily it described attitudes and actions. In America, 'white man' meant specific attitudes and actions toward the black man, and toward all other non-white men. ... And I knew that any American white man with a genuine brotherhood for a black man was hard to find, no matter how much he grinned."(8)

In other words, Malcolm did not reject his previous correct view that the "white man" is the enemy of non-white people, but added that this relation is based on white people's collective attitudes and actions, not on something inherent in white-skinned people.(9)

While the white left has tried to seize upon Malcolm's statements to the effect that good whites exist, Malcolm emphasized that while some whites are progressive, this is beside the main point:

> "The *problem* here in America is that we meet such a small number of individual so-called 'good,' or 'brotherly' white people. Here in the United States, notwithstanding those few 'good' white people, it is the *collective* 150 million white people whom the *collective* 22 million black people have to deal with!(10)

Also contrary to the wishful thinking of the white left, Malcolm did not become an integrationist:

> "I tucked it into my mind that when I returned home I would tell Americans this observation: that where true brotherhood existed among all colors, where no one felt segregated, where there was no 'superiority' complex, no 'inferiority' complex – then voluntarily, naturally, people of the same kind felt drawn together by that which they had in common."(11)

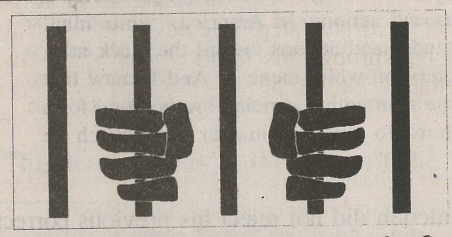
The SWP's George Breitman asserts, "By May, 1964, [Malcolm] was to discontinue altogether any advocacy of a separate nation, and to say that he thought Negroes should stay in the United States and fight for what was rightfully theirs."(*Malcolm X Speaks*, p. 19.) But in the *Autobiography*, in a chapter titled "1965," Malcolm states, "A *true* Negro revolt might entail, for instance, fighting for separate black states within this country – which several groups and individuals have advocated, long before Elijah Muhammad came along."(12) On Feb. 13, 1965, eight days before his death, Malcolm said of Blacks in North America, "[W]e're just as thoroughly colonized as anybody else."(13)

Malcolm X was killed on Feb. 21, 1965. Following the assassination, Elijah Muhammad slandered Malcolm in such a way as to assist the white left in its effort to co-opt the image of Malcolm X. Said Muhammad of Malcolm, "He came back preaching that we should not hate the enemy."(14) But the fact is that while Malcolm's view of white people became more nuanced than NOI's, Malcolm never once preached love or forgiveness for white people as a group.

In sum, Malcolm X's departure from the Nation of Islam was a progressive development. It marked a transition to a more action-oriented stance and towards all-faith, secular organizing for political goals. It also marked a shift to a more nuanced and materialist view of white people. Contrary to the assertions of Elijah Muhammad and the SWP, Malcolm X did not become an apologist for the white oppressor nation. He remained steadfast in what had already been a correct orientation. His departure from the Nation of Islam was progressive precisely because it allowed him to combine this orientation with political engagement and secular organizing.

Notes:

1. *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*, p. 289.
2. *Autobiography*, p. 354.
3. New York Times, Dec. 2, 1963.
4. *Autobiography*, p. 301.
5. *Autobiography*, pp. 309, 312.
6. *Autobiography*, pp. 187-189.
7. *Malcolm X Speaks*, p. 24.
8. *Autobiography*, pp. 333, 352.
9. This point is restated in *Autobiography*, p. 371.
10. *Autobiography*, p. 362, emphasis Malcolm's. This point is restated in *Autobiography*, p. 413.
11. *Autobiography*, p. 344.
12. *Autobiography*, pp. 367-368.
13. *Malcolm X Speaks*, p. 170.
14. *Autobiography*, p. 450.



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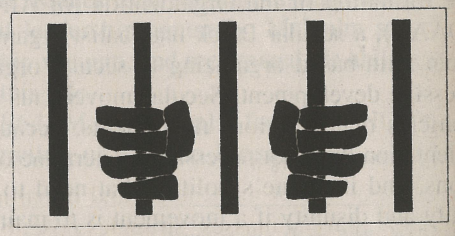

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Essay: Critique of Gandhi From The Left

Many pacifists and peaceniks in North America and around the world look to Ghandi as an example of successful nonviolent mass movements. MIM hopes this essay will help dissolve some of the idealism that surrounds Ghandi as a nonviolent icon. -ed.

by MC49

> "Such trash as Gandhiism, 'the parliamentary road' and the like are opium used by the Indian ruling classes to dope the Indian people. Only by relying on violent revolution and taking the road of armed struggle can India be saved and the Indian people achieve complete liberation."(1)

Saumyendranath Tagore, M. N. Roy and others make a good case for understanding Mohandas Gandhi (1869-1948) as a representative of the Indian national bourgeoisie.(2) The national bourgeoisie can be expected to struggle against the imperialist bourgeoisie, which restricts its ability to exploit its nation's people. The national bourgeoisie can just as much be expected to seek to restrain the masses' struggle, lest the masses seek to overthrow not only imperialist rule, but bourgeois and semi-feudal rule as well. Once this latter point is understood, and once Gandhi is understood to represent India's national bourgeoisie, it is easily understood why Mohandas Gandhi said, "The Anglo-Indian government does not suspect that I fear the masses as much as it does itself."(3)

It is this fear of the masses, and in particular of the potential threat that the masses' struggles pose to the national bourgeoisie's ability to obtain profits, which forms the basis for Gandhiism. On behalf of his class, Gandhi successfully sought to lead the mass movement for Indian independence from British colonial rule. From his position of leadership, he sought to restrain the struggle of the workers and peasants whom he led to carefully defined parameters. To do so, he preached to the masses a series of capitulationist proposals, which this essay will describe. These include a narrow definition of violence, a double-standard regarding violence, a disavowal of revolutionary violence in favor of the pipe-dream of moral persuasion of the oppressor, a false association of revolutionary violence with elitism, and a disavowal of people's rule and thus of socialism.

Bhikhu Parekh's paraphrase of an argument of Gandhi's illustrates the narrow way in which Gandhi defined violence: "In his view...[i]n order to be justified in taking the extreme step of harming or killing someone, one must assume that one's objectives are *absolutely* right, violence will *definitely* achieve them and that one's opponent is *totally* mistaken."(4) Gandhi's argument is premised on the idea that only a certain kind of violence is worth consideration.

What Gandhi leaves out is the very real possibility that violence can be the result not only of conscious action, but also of passivity in the face of violence. Concretely, that 14 million people a year die of starvation is a fact that should serve as a call to action to anyone with a social conscience.(5) These 14 million yearly deaths are the preventable product of a social system, imperialism.(6) Thus, these starvation deaths are a form of violence. If revolutionary violence can be shown to be the most effective method for ending imperialist-caused starvation, true opponents of violence will support it, provided it does not approach starvation in its ravages. And this can be shown. The Chinese socialist revolution first ousted Japanese imperialist forces and then built a self-reliant economy. The result was that life expectancy for the Chinese people doubled from 35 to 69 in the 27 years in which China was on the socialist road.(7) Nearly a million lives were doubled — a million murders prevented — in no small part because the Chinese masses took the "extreme step" of rising up in arms. Gandhi did not take this "extreme step." He never consciously engaged in violence, but through his failure to struggle successfully for a self-reliant economy instead of for neocolonialism, and through his success in dissuading people from using violence to end violence, he was in fact responsible for more violence than were the Chinese people's socialist warriors. Gandhi's narrow definition of violence obscured this fact.

Even if one is to accept Gandhi's limited definition of violence, however, one must note that Gandhi did not apply his standard of violence consistently. Instead, he employed a double-standard in which he preached non-violence to the oppressed, but not to their oppressors:

> "... Gandhiji told the workers: 'I do not propose to examine the duty of the capitalist. ... It is an unlawful demand which seeks merely to take advantage of the capitalists' position. ... To seek justice without resorting to violence and by an appeal to the good sense of the capitalist by arbitration, is lawful means.'"(8)

Here Gandhi truly turns things on their head. Saumyendranath Tagore correctly responds:

> "Which class takes advantage of the other? Does the worker take advantage of the capitalist's position or the capitalist of the workers' position? Does it require much intelligence to

> see who is the real victim? ... Who is forced to slave for the capitalist and to allow the capitalist to squeeze surplus labour out of him, without paying for it? Who, if he protests and strikes, is thrown out into the streets? Who is shot down by the police and the military of the capitalist state when he rightfully demands the full share of his labour?"(9)

Gandhi baldly states above that his message of nonviolence is aimed at the workers, not at the capitalists whose duty he does not "propose to examine." This brings to mind a statement by Malcolm X, who represented a much more progressive wing of the Black nation's national bourgeoisie:

> "I don't favor violence. ... But I'm also a realist. The only people in this country who are asked to be nonviolent are Black people. I've never heard anybody go to the Ku Klux Klan and teach them nonviolence, or to the Birch society and other right-wing elements. Nonviolence is only preached to Black Americans and I don't go along with anyone who wants to teach our people nonviolence until someone at the same time is teaching our enemy to be nonviolent. I believe we should protect ourselves by any means necessary when we are attacked by racists."(10)

Tagore echoes Malcolm X on this point:

> "According to Gandhiji, 'the mill-hands have to learn to identify themselves with the interests of the millowners'. ... Why does Gandhiji not preach to his friends, the capitalists — the millowners (on our part we are convinced that preaching would not help in the least unless backed by force, and unless ultimately force is used) to identify with the interest of the mill-hands by ceasing to exploit them?"(11)

Gandhi's duplicitous use of nonviolent philosophy, like his narrow definition of violence, served to provide limits on the mass movement he led. In this case, Gandhi showed that his nonviolent philosophy had as its aim the restriction of the means of redress available to the mass movement for India's liberation. Surely, if he was truly interested in opposing violence, he would have preached nonviolence to the capitalists against whom the more class-conscious Indian workers and peasants struggled. Instead, he told the workers not to take advantage of the capitalists!

Further aiming to restrict the mass movement, Gandhi told the masses that rather than overthrow their oppressors by any means necessary, the masses should appeal to the "good sense" of their oppressors. "For Gandhi violence ultimately rests on the assumption that some men are so fallen that they can never be won over by love and must be humbled by force."(12) Absolutes like "never" gave Gandhi a lot of leeway. The masses do not have "forever" to persuade those with social, economic, military and political power to surrender their power, at best a formidable task. No, the masses are dying of imperialist-backed starvation, disease, and war *now*, and cannot afford the luxury of a protracted philosophical argument with their oppressors. Gandhi at best fails to understand that, generally speaking, the masses engage in revolutionary violence not because of what the oppressors are *thinking*, but because of what they are *doing*.

'Elitist' violence?

Gandhi sought to discredit revolutionary violence by painting it as inherently elitist. Parekh paraphrases Gandhi: "In his view violence is by its very nature confined to a few and does not actively involve the vast masses of men. It is thus elitist in orientation, encourages the cult of leadership and [is] likely to do little more than replace the British with a small minority of indigenous rulers."(13) Where did Gandhi get this idea about violence? Certainly there are revolutionary theories such as focoism which incorrectly call for small bands of heroes to engage in armed struggle in isolation from the masses. But there is also a long history, from the Paris Commune to the Russian Revolution, to the Maoist strategy of People's War as waged in China, Vietnam, Peru and the Philippines, of *arming the masses* both militarily and politically. While Gandhi's conclusion would be correct if his assertion were correct, the facts fly in his face. There is nothing inherently elitist about revolutionary violence. Furthermore, precisely because it was the Chinese masses, not an isolated few, who made the Chinese revolution, the Chinese revolution did not merely replace the old exploiters with new ones. In fact, that is what happened in India, where the anti-colonial movement followed Gandhi and his strategy of non-violence and replaced old-style colonialism with neocolonialism. (14)

But the idea of socialist revolution was anathema to Gandhi. Gandhi's comment on Bolshevism was, "Mobocracy is autocracy multiplied [a] million times."(15) Mobocracy? Even while disparaging the masses as a "mob," Gandhi here acknowledged that it is the masses who rule in Bolshevik Russia, much to his dismay. Remember, Gandhi openly admitted to fearing the masses.

In sum, as a leading representative of the Indian national bourgeoisie, Mohandas Gandhi used his position of leadership to limit the struggle of India's peasants and workers. To this end, he promoted a narrow definition of violence that excluded imperialist-caused starvation from consideration. He held a double-standard regarding violence, criticizing the violence of the oppressed before the violence of the oppressor. In place of revolutionary violence, he promoted the pipe-dream of moral persuasion of the oppressor. He falsely equated revolutionary violence with elitism and neocolonialism. Finally, he feared the masses, feared their struggle, feared their rule, and thus opposed socialism.

Notes:

1. Renmin Ribao (People's Daily), organ of the Communist Party of China, July 1967.
2. In particular, see Sudarshan Chattopadhyaya, ed., *Against the Stream: An Anthology of the Writings of Saumyendranath Tagore*, Calcutta, 1975, pp. 19-31.

3. Kyril Tidmarsh, "The Soviet Re-Assessment of Gandhi," St. Antony's Papers, #8 (South Asian Affairs, #1), Raghavan Iyer, ed., p. 100.
4. Bhikhu Parekh, "Gandhi's Theory of Non-violence: His Reply to the Terrorists," *Terrorism, Ideology, and Revolution*, p. 183, italics in the original
5. Ruth Sivard, *World Military and Social Expenditures*, 1987-8, p. 25.
6. See for instance the works of Frances Moore Lappe.
7. Associated Press in Ann Arbor News, 1 October 1989.
8. Tagore, op. cit., p. 20.
9. Tagore, op. cit., p. 20-21.
10. *By Any Means Necessary*, Malcolm X, Pathfinder Press, New York, 1970, p. 160.
11. Tagore, op. cit., p. 24.
12. Parekh, op. cit., p. 183.
13. Parekh, op. cit., pp. 187-188.
14. On India as a case of neo-colonialism, see *The Sino-Indian Boundary Question*, Foreign Languages Press, Beijing, 1962, pp. 110-112.
15. M. N. Roy, *Selected Writings*, Delhi: Oxford, 1989, Vol. II., p. 311.

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Reviews & Briefs

Differences between MIM & the Progressive Labor Party

Here we review the most recent work of the Progressive Labor Party (PLP). In recent years, there have been changes in the rank-and-file of the PLP and changes in the views and personnel of the leadership. Here MIM reviews our differences, which boil down to two things: (1) PLP uses an idealist method instead of a dialectical materialist method, and (2) PLP has an incorrect factual analysis of imperialist country conditions and conditions globally, rooted in an incorrect political economy.

Problems in the PLP's political economy analysis have led it to reach for higher heights of idealism. Much of PLP's theory is ultraleftist, which means getting ahead of the real possibilities for political advance possible under current conditions. In practice, it appears that PLP's ultraleftism is merely a cover for "reformism," as PLP itself calls it in the document "Road to Revolution 4.5."

The PLP homepage

Here is a point by point review of the PLP web site.

1. PLP: "The former Soviet Union, Eastern Europe, and China returned to capitalism many years ago. Capitalism, not communism, is failing all over the world."

MIM agrees, but PLP disagrees with MIM on what years China became capitalist. MIM is more pro-Mao.

2. PLP: "The two-stage strategy of first socialism, then communism, failed to lead to communism. It led back to capitalism. Therefore, we must fight directly for communism."

MIM says this is typical ultraleft idealism. It's ultraleft because PLP seeks to get too far ahead by skipping the socialist stage. It's ultraleft idealist, because nowhere in history is there any support from an actual class struggle that shows any glimmer of hope for the PLP approach. Since the PLP is racing ahead of conditions, it doesn't get anywhere and in fact sets things back. That means they are "ultraleft in appearance, rightist in essence." We can fairly say Mao's approach accomplished socialism for a generation. PLP's approach never brought socialism or any advance anywhere, so PLPism leads to capitalism.

The only possible way to counterattack MIM's line is to take a double standard. Apply one standard to Maoism and another standard to PLPism. Then judge the first (Maoism) a failure while PLPism is the road forward. The Trotskyists adopt the same tactic.

The anarchists and the Trotskyists share PLP's ultraleftism. They too have failed.

3. PLP: "Communism means abolishing nation states, which are an expression of capitalism."

MIM agrees with this about communism, but the existence of a proletarian state is not capitalism. It is socialism. And nation-based struggles are the first stage in anti-imperialist socialist struggles.

4. PLP: "Communism means abolishing racism by building multi- racial unity and internationalism. Communism means abolishing sexism. Communism means equality. No money. No wages. People working based on their commitment to each other and to building a communist society."

This is true about communism, but the word "equality" is used too abstractly. Distribution under communism is according to "need," so some may receive more than others. Under communism, people won't mind, though. Under socialism, in a transition to communism, people receive according to their work, instead of how much property they own. This is not completely "equal" either, but it is not exploitation.

5. PLP continues. . ."Just as we do now in the Party."

Ultraleftism always leads to lifestyle politics, which is sub-reformist. MIM must point out that it is not possible to accomplish communism now inside a Party. If it were possible to just join a Party and accomplish communism, we would not need a revolution.

MIM's cardinal principles

1. PLP claims to adopt the same line as MIM upholding Stalin and opposing Soviet revisionism. (In practice, PLP opposes Stalin on the national question, the abolition of the world party, the united front, stages, etc.)

2. PLP claims to uphold the Cultural Revolution in China. In actuality PLP supports the ultraleftists in China who harmed the Cultural Revolution and allowed the capitalist-roaders in China today to seize power. The PLP line on the Cultural Revolution accomplished this by supporting the Red Guards in the Cultural Revolution who said that 90-95% of the Communist Party of millions was "bourgeois." According to PLP, Mao was a capitalist-roader who shut down the Cultural Revolution and led the new capitalist class.

The anarchists were so pleased with PLP's line on this that an anarchist book house named Black Rose published the PLP line on this along with some documents from Trotskyists in a book called *The Revolution Is Dead: Long Live the Revolution!*

This was the crucial point that kept MIM founders from trying to join the

PLP instead of forming MIM. By attacking the Communist Party of China and its millions of worker and peasant members as a "capitalist-class," PLP let Deng Xiaoping off the hook. If one has to attack so widely — attacking 90-95% of the party, then one has too many targets in the case of China. The PLP-line thus assured that the proletariat was fighting amongst itself while the Deng Xiaopings took power.

We at MIM do not believe China under Mao Zedong was capitalist and we don't believe that a party of millions of the basic toiling masses like Mao's party would become a capitalist-class. That is just what the Deng Xiaopings would like us to believe so that no one focuses their attention on them.

3. The white working class as a labor aristocracy. PLP disagrees with MIM as clearly as can be. "Road to Revolution 4.5" attempts to handle some of MIM's attacks on this question but fails.

The PLP does not define the words "proletariat" and "semi-proletariat" the way Lenin did. (See a complete review of Lenin and the Comintern on this question in MIM Theory 10.) The reason for this is that PLP wants to smuggle the middle-class semi-proletariat into the proletariat and transform communist parties into militant middle-class parties.

PLP does not follow Marx's distinction between productive and unproductive laborers. Nor does PLP apply that distinction internationally as MIM does. Hence, PLP never tells anyone that by Lenin's definition the vast majority of people in North America are "semi-proletarians" not "proletarians." PLP never explains anywhere that the vast majority of white workers are "unproductive" workers, parasites who do white-collar work.

Review of "Road to Revolution 4.5"

PLP expresses its method of idealism quite clearly:

"Our own history, like that of our predecessors, has been a series of qualitative moves to the left. ... We have been compelled to explain the failure of socialism and the subsequent restoration of capitalism. ... We have broken with nationalism. ... We have rejected the separation of state and Party. ... Every one of our breaks represents yet another halting step towards communism."

Marx opposed just such a view of ideas and explained that it was necessary to acquire a sufficient material force to move forward. Here PLP claims that changing their own minds marks a step toward communism. With such a view of stages of progress, no wonder PLP finds the actual stage of socialism unnecessary. If a collection of individuals change their minds, according to PLP, we are making steps toward communism. Such is ordinary lifestyle-politics and Liberalism — sub-reformism.

This idealism has now perhaps for the first time in PLP history raised its pragmatist head quite clearly. In the past, PLP has tried to fight pragmatism with idealism. While the PLP talks about a gap between its revolutionary theory and its reformist practice, there is an additional gap — the gap between its revolutionary theory and the march of history.

Now when difficulties arise, the PLP just changes its ideas. It has always been a hallmark of pragmatism to make a theory for every difficult phenomenon and thereby have no real theory about anything. When one adopts theory so haphazardly, it becomes possible to say one was "right" about anything, because one time or another, one indeed did say something about it.

With haphazard theory, double standards easily make their way in. Hence PLP informs the world, "our evaluation has been confirmed by the collapse of the old international communist movement, which has abandoned even the pretense of building a communist society."

If we applied the same standard to PLPism, we would conclude that "our evaluation of PLPism has been con-

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firmed by its continued sterility in terms of giving birth to revolution." Looking at historical facts in a big way is dangerous to idealists. It exposes those who use double standards. As long as PLP confirmed its ideas with other ideas, PLP was hermetically sealed in itself. Once it referred to the "collapse of the old international communist movement," PLP invited others to sum up PLPism historically as well, using the same standards. And guess what, PLPism has not resulted in any communism, unless we take the sub-reformist lifestyle-politics view that communism is not created through revolution but in our own individual lives, as by joining the PLP.

PLP has made a critique of its own reformism: "We continued to make the opportunist error of blending the long-term goal of communism with the short-term practice of militant reform of capitalism. We too, have kept stages in the fight for communism." For the most part, PLP has attempted to cover such practice with a change in theoretical idealisms. Now we turn to the roots of the problem — an unscientific approach to political economy.

Bad political economy

"Thirty years ago, we mistakenly believed in 'good' and 'bad' nationalism," says PLP. MIM says PLP was only correct 30 and more years ago. It's break with Soviet revisionism was dramatic and historic for the proletariat. Once the Black Panthers arrived on the scene though, the Progressive Labor Party achieved Trotskyist irrelevance at warp speed.

At that time, PLP wrote "Road to Revolution III" and some polemics against Mao while possessing a strong spirit of self-criticism and the understanding that Marxism-Leninism had to be applied in North America. Over time though, PLP was not able to see that it was wrong in the breaks that it made with Maoism, and PLP became a party for the labor aristocracy.

Mistake number one that the PLP never summed up was throwing itself without reserve into the "workers" of North America. Coining the phrase, "student-worker alliance," the PLP told students to take the offensive from campus where they had already won, to the factories for the decisive battles. In this, PLP no doubt had Mao's blessing.

Nonetheless, the effort of student outreach to the workers ended in degeneration. We must now sum up that phase of the 1965-1975 period. PLP only assumed that the workers were "exploited" and "proletarian." Closer examination proves that this was not the case. MIM Theory 1 and MIM Theory 10 treat that subject in greater detail.

The mistake of "Road to Revolution III" on nationalism also had its foundation in incorrect political economy. PLP understood only two material facts in the world. One, it understood that imperialism extracted profits from workers. Two, PLP understood that the bourgeoisie of oppressed nations would attempt to use nationalism for its own class interests. Therefore, according to PLP, the answer is simple: abandon nationalism and unite the workers against the imperialists. When it comes to sexism, again, PLP says unite the workers as the solution.

PLP overlooked two facts of the material world — the labor aristocracy and the gender aristocracy. These two groups are rooted in superprofits and gender privilege.

PLP did not notice that the workers in the Six Counties of "Northern Ireland" who were "Protestant" obtained better jobs; they got the labor aristocracy jobs while the republican workers received the proletarian jobs. As a result of this and other open bribery by both U.S. and British imperialism, the "Protestant" workers changed their national allegiance to Britain. Likewise in Taiwan today, the yuppies favor independence, because they don't want to pay taxes to any central government that would assist poorer Chinese. In addition, throughout North America in the First Nations and other oppressed nations, the college education system sucks out the youth and assimilates them so that they don't care about their origins, and only care about using that diploma as a justification for petty-bourgeois or bourgeois status. In brief, nationality can be bought out.

Although PLP believes that nationality boiled down to class issues, PLP excludes many class issues as possibilities. When it arrived at its line, PLP saw only one class issue — capitalists versus workers. When the imperialists bribed certain workers and did so to recruit people to oppressor nations, PLP did not notice and continued to base its organization among those bribed workers. As a result, PLP puts forward the demands of workers tied to imperialism. Those workers seek pay raises by opposing nationalism of other workers, and by using the exploited workers for their own ends. PLP does these workers a big favor by turning a blind eye to the bribery that was addressed by Marx, Engels, Lenin, Stalin and Mao.

In MIM Theory 1, MIM opened with a criticism of the Spartacist League and Progressive Labor Party for calling for "30 for 40!" in the imperialist countries (30 hours work for 40 hours' pay). Our slogan would be "30 for 300!" in the oppressed countries first. In "Road to Revolution 4.5," PLP drops the slogan "30 for 40!" That is a step forward, but it is done in the name of idealist opposition to reformism.

PLP makes a number of related points about its own line. "Workers don't need a movement for jobs or multi-racial unity or for a $10 or even a $20 an hour minimum wage. They need a vigorous communist Party embedded in the working class and explaining communism." What PLP doesn't explain is that as long as one is based in the labor-aristocracy by virtue of line, one is going to spout social-democracy, which is reformism to prop up the capitalist system. The proletarian elements around PLP need to see through this and make a break for MIM.

Likewise, PLP mentions "superexploitation," and thereby sounds like MIM, but PLP does not mention where those superprofits go and how the imperialists use them to reinforce imperialism along national lines. On this point, PLP abandons Lenin and Stalin as well as

Mao.

A related and better improvement for PLP as of "Road to Revolution 4.5" is that it now recognizes that multi-racial working class unity in itself is not revolutionary. MIM has slammed all those Trotskyists who preach multi-racial integrationism while criticizing nationalism. What did multi-racial integrationism achieve? Now PLP acknowledges that, "Most workers oppose racism based on liberal, reformist ideology." This is not factually certain, of course. Although most whites tell survey-takers they oppose racism, their actions speak louder than their public words.

The next step is for PLP to break out of its straight-jacket. If there is good and bad "anti-racism," then there is good and bad "nationalism." There is the revolutionary nationalism of the oppressed (Mao) and the reactionary nationalism of the oppressors (KKK); there is reformist integrationism that seeks to undermine national liberation (Martin Luther King), and there is communism integrationism that seeks to end all national divisions *only after* ending all national oppression (Lenin).

The current PLP line is four-square for the labor aristocracy because it denies national oppression. It denies that the imperialists use superprofits to subsidize the labor aristocracy out of exploitation. The PLP is so good at sniffing out the class interests of the Black bourgeoisie, but it can't see what is going on with the white workers getting bribes to side with imperialism.

In practice, reformist integrationism and narrow nationalism are linked. Farrakhan is an example. One moment he is trying to sound like a tough separatist, even calling Malcolm X a "traitor." The next moment he is taking federal government contracts and organizing voter registration campaigns. The Black bourgeoisie uses narrow nationalism to mobilize the masses and then it delivers them to integrationist projects. The PLP on the other hand wants us to believe that there is only the evil of nationalism. "All nationalism is reactionary," PLP says. However, it is the flaccid national bourgeoisie that is the source of both narrow nationalism and liberal, tokenist integrationism. There is nothing inherent about multi-racial politics that is revolutionary or progressive.

Integration and assimilation can be progressive in some contexts. However, in a situation where the white workers have been so thoroughly corrupted, it is a mistake to push for integrationism. There must be a period of dictatorship over oppressor nations before the various peoples of North America can share the same judicial system, for instance. The Vincent Chin and Rodney King cases prove that even with clear evidence, white juries just can't see straight.

Single-issue organizing

On these issues of how to relate the mass movements to the party, PLP openly took up some lines more similar to MIM's. For instance, PLP now opposes putting time into building pro-capitalist unions and it recognizes that reformist friends are correct when they say that "revolutionary communist struggle will come at the expense of the reform struggle."

In recent years, there has been bragging by social-democratic intellectuals of how the Communist Party-USA has become a "grass-roots culture," by which they mean an apolitical circle of friends and relatives. Now PLP takes a stand similar to MIM on recruiting friends to the party. It's not the way to go. "Our goal is not merely dozens of friendships."

Conclusion

There are some things we like about PLP, especially its early history. Today it still contains those comrades who realize that party size is not everything and line is much more important. Some leading comrades are highly aware of pragmatism, but they err in fighting it with idealism.

When it comes to factual analysis, we at MIM recognize that there are comrades in PLP who do pursue information and analysis with appropriate seriousness. They should now address the MIM polemic against them or join MIM instead.

We are disturbed that many PLP comrades do not know anything about the PLP line on the Cultural Revolution and Mao. What PLP needs to do is study the Cultural Revolution and correct its ultra-left view.

Next, PLP needs to account for those situations as in Israel, apartheid South Africa and the imperialist countries generally, where the workers were bribed into reactionary nationalism. If PLP comrades continue to hold that only the bourgeoisie is a basis for nationalism, and that superprofits are not a basis for oppressor-nation nationalism, then the PLP comrades will continue to be spokespeople for the labor aristocracy. Such professional organizers are known as "labor bureaucrats."

PLP comrades need to return to Lenin's definition of "proletariat" for the imperialist countries. Anyone who can't admit that the white workers in South Africa were bought-off in apartheid to oppose Black workers, along national lines, is hopeless.

On gender, it is not simply a matter of workers or even biology. That white women can appropriate Black men's sexuality is not a class or "race" phenomenon. The majority of Black men accused of rape are accused by white women. The system does not give white men the privilege of accusing Black men of rape, so this is not a "race" issue. White men already have racial and gender privileges. To give such gender privileges to white women, the system appropriated the sexualities of oppressed nation men and tested birth control on Third World women. With an imprisonment figure comparable to Stalin during wartime, seven percent of Black men are in prison. That is tied historically to the passions connected to lynching.

This taking of a group (white women and other groups) that ordinarily by biology would not be expected to have such power and then giving it sexual power is very similar to what happens with superprofits and workers. Workers receive superprofits and become something

other than proletarians. Biological females can receive gender privileges at the expense of others and become men in social terms. Ordinarily it takes a father to have full patriarchal privilege in the patriarchal system, but the system has refined itself to allow for a wider variety of disbursement of privileges. Now even young childless men from the imperialist countries can engage in sex tourism in Thailand where they have access to the bodies of young children. Such privilege exerts a conservative influence on those who would not ordinarily be thought of as "patriarchs."

The same is true with imperialism. Ordinarily imperialists receive the benefits and workers are exploited, but superprofits allow a minority a to arise out of exploitation and to appropriate small amounts of proletarian labor. These complications of gender and class have proved too much for PLP. When they are used to reinforce nationality, PLP misses the picture completely: Are there any fighters for reaction more passionate than those that just stole land — Israeli settlers, South African settlers, Pilgrims killing First Nation members, etc.?

At this time, some proletarians are fooled by the PLP line. However, if we go back and study some theory, we will see how PLP let its "Marxism-Leninism" be corrupted by the labor aristocracy. Look at what is happening in North America — with the attacks on welfare, "crime," immigration, etc. Things like "English only" are happening because whites are acting as white nationalists. It is not just racism, because the racism and white nationalism are reinforced with superprofits distributed to white Euro-Amerikans.

Historical Revisionists, Too:

On the RCP's "Charting the Uncharted Course: Proletarian Revolution in the U.S.!"

This review , written December 10, 1994, has not yet been published. -ed.

The Revolutionary Communist Party (RCP)'s 17-page pamphlet "Charting the Uncharted Course: Proletarian Revolution in the U.S.!" (CUC) is a reprinted section of the report from the RCP's 1980 Central Committee meeting which first appeared in the RCP's Revolutionary Worker #99 on April 3, 1981. CUC is interesting to MIM because it discusses the revolutionary nature of the North American white working-class, a key point of disagreement between MIM and the RCP.

Interestingly, CUC finds the RCP arguing with forces more deeply entrenched in right-opportunism than is the RCP. The RCP has some correct things to say to these forces, but ultimately shows its disagreement with MIM's assertion that the North American white working-class is not a revolutionary vehicle. To this day, people influenced by the RCP still point to CUC to say that the RCP has more agreement with MIM than MIM realizes. These people need to read the RCP program, which says that a majority of white workers are objectively revolutionary. And there is no excuse for ignoring the RCP's only official assessment of MIM, which states that MIM's line on the white working-class is "a wrong and counterrevolutionary idea."(1, 15)

Revisionism

Before dissecting CUC's statements on the white working-class, we should point out that the RCP makes several veiled and slippery attacks on Stalin and Mao in this pamphlet. This is typical of the RCP, particularly the RCP of the

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early 1980s. These attacks are cloaked by the RCP's claim in CUC that they uphold Marxism-Leninism, Mao Zedong Thought.(2) They are further cloaked by being presented as parenthetical, throw-away remarks (just as the RCP's only official assessment of MIM is hidden in a footnote). Take a look:

Against Stalin: "While we have to criticize what's clearly wrong in the past, more will be required of us than simply trashing a few things from some old Comintern documents, important though that is."(2)

Against Stalin: "Stalin's (surprisingly!) dialectical analysis here is relevant."(3)

Against Stalin and Mao: "A general point should be made parenthetically here. It seems that historically the biggest political retreats have been sounded by communists right when the opportunity for advance is the greatest – i.e., the Second International, the 7th World Congress of the Comintern, etc."(4)

The Trotskyist substance of these cryptic comments can be found in the RCP's "Conquer the World? The International Proletariat Can and Will."(5)

The Better Stuff

As CUC finds the RCP arguing with forces to their right, it isn't all bad. In CUC, the RCP says that there was economism at their 1975 Founding Congress, part and parcel of which was to "relegate [the questions of bourgeoisification and the labor aristocracy] simply to a question of 'rolling over the top labor hacks.'" Adds CUC, "we have broken with this static and economist view." Since 1976, "we have taken a harder look and a much more correct line on the (related) questions of bourgeoisification and the labor aristocracy."(6) Like MIM, the RCP distinguishes between proletariat and labor aristocracy.(7) Unlike MIM, the RCP refers to "the better off sections of the industrial proletariat" as different from and qualitatively better than "the labor aristocracy."(8)

While MIM holds that the North American white working-class as a whole is part of the labor aristocracy, the RCP does not indicate that it has much disagreement with the Trotskyist view that the labor aristocracy is solely composed of union bosses. The RCP comes close to breaking with other Trotskyists on this point when it poses the correct question of "what is the proletariat, or the 'real proletariat,' as opposed to the labor aristocracy." Here, however, the RCP fails to find the correct answer to its correct question, due to its First World-chauvinist assumptions.(7)

CUC correctly quotes Mao: "the more backward the economy, the easier ... the transition from capitalism to socialism. The poorer they are, the more people want revolution."(7)

Some other correct statements from CUC:

"In this country, bourgeoisification has deeply and with some permanence penetrated into the industrial proletariat, including into its most socialized sectors. This is especially true in some of the most basic or 'key' industries such as steel or auto."(7)

"'dead-end' jobs ... have been filled disproportionately by minorities, women, youth and, more recently, by 'illegals' and immigrant workers. What stands out about these jobs is that they are low-paying and offer little security..."(9)

"[I]f a backward steel worker wants to carry on about how welfare recipients are 'sponges on working people,' then a welfare mother could certainly turn around and call him out as a parasite on the world proletariat. (Of course here we are talking about analysis to serve revolution, not to serve mutual recrimination.)"(10) True enough. So why does the RCP now turn around and say that MIM's idea "that white workers as an economic-social grouping in the United States are not exploited [and] are part of the process of exploitation of the workers of the Third World ... is a wrong and counterrevolutionary idea."?(1)

Some more good stuff:

"[I]t would be silly to believe that all this bourgeoisification (and certainly the ideological effects of long years of it) will break down completely and uniformly."(10)

"[T]he proletariat or 'real' proletariat that will form the most reliable social base for a revolutionary line does not completely correspond to the classical 'working class in highly socialized, basic industry.'"(10)

"[B]etween the characteristics of working in large-scale socialized industry, and having 'nothing to lose but their chains' the latter characteristic is a more decisive, revolutionary characteristic of the proletariat."(10)

"Chairman Avakian [said], 'I think a lot of what the advanced section of the proletariat is now are people who for reasons other than simply being members of the proletariat are somewhat politically advanced.' And he goes on to speak in particular of the people who were heavily influenced by the '60s – of vets, oppressed nationalities, women, as well as many immigrants, etc." (11)

The Worse Stuff

Unfortunately, despite all their talk about the bourgeoisification of the white working-class, and even of its parasitic nature, the RCP manages to avoid discussing the basis of this parasitism: the fact that the imperialists buy off the imperialist-country working-classes with a share of the superprofits generated by the Third World workers and peasants. Instead, they harp on "economism," as if it was only a lack of correct communist leadership which led to the bourgeoisification of the First World workers. This is why they say of the U.S., "The majority in this society, let alone worldwide, have no interest in this decadent, moribund imperialist system. This certainly applies to the overwhelming numbers of workers in this country."(12)

By ignoring superprofits, the RCP feels comfortable saying that bourgeoisification "is breaking down." (6) In fact, they say "there is a broad erosion of bourgeoisification..." (10) Fifteen years later (and many decades after First World-chauvinist "leftists" first started raising this argument), the RCP still says

this, and it still hasn't happened. The RCP advances this "just wait; they'll come around" line in detail in Raymond Lotta's book, *America in Decline*. MIM trashes this line elsewhere. (14)

Then there is the standard RCP right-opportunism: "Of course giving up on the better off sections of the industrial proletariat would be silly at best.... *It would be difficult* to successfully complete an insurrection and civil war without a majority of these workers coming over at some point, and some whole sections of them may even play a kind of vanguard political role" (emphasis MIM's).(8) MIM says the oppressed will overthrow imperialism with or without the help of the First World workers.

"It would be difficult..." is what people in RCP circles told MIM's predecessors when they announced their decision to form a new Party, MIM. Such pragmatists need to be reminded that political and ideological line, not tactics, is decisive: "The correctness or otherwise of the ideological and political line decides everything. When the Party's line is correct, then everything will come its way. If it has no followers, then it can have followers; if it has no guns, then it can have guns; if it has no political power, then it can have political power."(16)

Finally, in an attempt to bring reality in line with the RCP's Trotskyite idealism, the RCP revises history:

"[W]e should look at what went down here in the '60s in light of what is coming up. At the height of the struggle in that decade, the ruling class was on the defensive politically. The division of opinion on the cardinal questions of the day was not at all favorable to them – even including in the working class. Now look at the possibilities ahead. What if the alignment and situation were to start off similar to the '60s alignment,' with the critical addition of a section of the proletariat in the fray from the beginning (the [lower paid, 'real proletarian'] section we have been referring to above)? Why wouldn't that be a favorable situation from which to begin an attempt for the seizure of power? A situation with all the ferment among all the classes of the '60s with a minority section of the workers in at the beginning, and playing a role in 'swinging in' a wider section of the workers further down the line – precisely those who today find their situation tolerable, not fine."(13)

Here, the RCP ignores the fact that the "real proletariat" *was* in the fray from the beginning: the Black masses' 1965 shift from civil rights to Black Power was instrumental in prompting white student activists to go beyond tailing the civil rights movement. By March 1969, Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) acknowledged that the Black Panther Party was the vanguard revolutionary force inside U.S. borders. This prompts the question: if the "real proletariat" was in the fray from the beginning, why didn't the 60's provide a revolutionary opportunity? Why didn't the existence of a minority section of the workers in at the beginning play the role of "swinging in" a wider section of the workers further down the line (wider, that is, than was actually swung in)?

The answer is superprofits. The North American white working-class, among others, has been bought and paid for by the imperialists. They correctly see the survival of imperialism as being in their own parasitic interest. No matter how hard the RCP tries to revise history to bring it in line with their idealist worldview, they cannot conceal this truth.

— a comrade

Notes:

1. Revolutionary Worker: Voice of the Revolutionary Communist Party, USA, 1/16/94, p. 5.
2. CUC, p. 1.
3. CUC, p. 11
4. CUC, p. 12
5. Revolution #50.
6. CUC, p. 2
7. CUC, p. 4
8. CUC, p. 9
9. CUC, p. 5
10. CUC, p. 6
11. CUC, p. 8
12. CUC, p. 10
13. CUC, pp. 10-11
14. See MIM Theory 4: "Unraveling the Political Economy of the Revolutionary Communist Party, USA: Book review of *America In Decline*," pp. 94-103, and "MA71 Lets it Rip," pp. 12-14. Available from MIM for $6. Also see H.W. Edwards' *Labor Aristocracy: Mass Base for Social Democracy*, available from MIM for $10.
15. For a fuller response to the line that the RCP does not disagree with MIM on the question of the white working-class, see "Opportunism is the sister of revisionism," MIM Theory 5, pp. 99-100. Available from MIM for $6.
16. Mao Zedong in Stuart Schram, ed., *Chairman Mao Talks to the People*, p. 290.

Bizarre left group Responds to Spartacist League

The Trotskyist Spartacist League's youth arm recently wrote about MIM in an article about a pro-affirmative action demonstration and sit-in at UCLA.(1)

Young Spartacus wrote:

"For minority youth under attack at UCLA and in the ghettos, the way to fight racist oppression lies in siding with the multiracial working class, which alone has the power to get rid of capitalism. It will take a revolutionary workers party that serves as a tribune of the oppressed to lead this fight.

"One bizarre left group at the UCLA sit-in, the Maoist International [sic] Movement (MIM), misses this reality entirely. While they defend affirmative action as 'progressive, but severely limited,' they raise no demands to open up the universities to the majority of blacks and minorities. Echoing odd pseudo-nationalist dogma, MIM says that blacks are a 'colonial nation' and writes off the working class, dismissing the U.S. proletariat as a reactionary part of an 'oppressor nation.' But black people constitute an oppressed minority whose main impetus for struggle since the time of slavery has been to fight toward full integration — not some 'colonial libera-

tion.' Black people helped build the wealth of American society first as slaves and today as a strategic layer of the working class...." (1)

MIM RESPONDS

The "multiracial working class" within U.S. borders is composed of groups that are objectively revolutionary and groups that are objectively counterrevolutionary. Hence it is incorrect to speak of these different groups as though they all have the same material interests by virtue of all being a part of the same "multiracial working class." In particular, MIM demonstrated in MIM Theory 1 that unlike proletarians, white workers as a group are paid more than the value of their labor.(2) The Spartacist League has yet to respond to MIM Theory 1. The majority of the white working-class has more to lose than its chains, and hence can only be considered to constitute a labor aristocracy. (By extension, the U.S. Empire's "multiracial working class" is majority labor aristocracy). This explains why, as a group, white workers consistently unite with the white petit-bourgeoisie and bourgeoisie to support imperialist wars, Ronald Reagan, David Duke, Pat Buchanan, Proposition 187, Reginald Denny and now the attacks on affirmative action. The labor aristocracy does not agree with the bourgeoisie on all issues, but it has shown a consistent preference for unity with imperialism and fascism over unity with exploited workers and peasants. MIM argues that this reflects the labor aristocracy's material interest — not just subjective confusion or misleadership.

The Trotskyists pretend to oppose all nationalism, but they are in fact Amerikan nationalists — the most reactionary kind of nationalist there is. It is only within an Amerikan-nationalist framework (or its Eurocentric equivalent) that the word "minority" can be understood to refer to Black, Latino, First Nation, and Asian-descended people. The people of the oppressed nations — in Africa, Asia, Latin America and North America — constitute 80% of the world's people. White North Americans, and oppressor-nation people generally, are the real "minorities." Another key point about language is that when the Sparts talk about "racist" oppression instead of national oppression, they promote the idea that it is individually held attitudes, not the exercise of group power, which oppresses Blacks as a group.

In any case, when the Sparts say, "For minority youth under attack at UCLA and in the ghettos, the way to fight racist oppression lies in siding with the multiracial working class," they are spreading a popular but deadly illusion.(1) The incorrect idea that the "multiracial working class" is a unitary group which is objectively revolutionary leads to the strategic error the Sparts recommend here: to fight "racist" (national) oppression, "minority youth ... in the ghettos" should side with (among other groups) the white working-class. For reasons described above, the white working-class is leading the charge for criminalizing, jailing, executing, sterilizing, starving, evicting, undereducating and deporting ghetto, barrio and reservation youth.

And that's just on a good day. On a bad day, a white worker like William Masters will shoot a proletarian youth down in cold blood for writing graffiti on property, while other property-owning workers will make a hero out of the killer.

Warning to ghetto youth: the white working-class is part of the problem, not the solution. For individual whites to be of use in the struggle against racist/national oppression, they must join with the oppressed in struggle against the white oppressor nation, including the majority of white workers. Anybody who believes that ghetto youth should unite with "the multiracial working class" within U.S. borders should send $9 to MIM for a copy of *Settlers: The Mythology of the White Proletariat*, by J. Sakai.

SIMPLY UNTRUE

It is simply untrue that MIM "raise[s] no demands to open up the universities to the majority of blacks and minorities." Point Five of MIM's Program states in part: "We believe that the oppressed need independent institutions to provide land, bread, housing, education, medical care, clothing, justice and peace. We believe that the best independent institution of all is a self-reliant socialist government." Furthermore, we uphold China 1966-1976 as the farthest advance towards communism. By building "socialism in one country," the Maoists opened up education to the broad masses of Chinese people, including the national minorities. Meanwhile, Trotskyists elsewhere mouthed militant-sounding slogans, but in practice built socialism in no countries, and could boast no similar successes.(3)

The Sparts consider Black nationalism to be "pseudo-nationalism," because they believe that Blacks do not constitute a nation.(1) But the real "pseudo-nationalism" is the Spart position, which covers the fact that while there is a Euro-Amerikan nation, the United Snakes itself is not a nation, but an Empire — a prisonhouse of nations. In *Marxism and the National Question*, Comrade Stalin wrote, "A nation is a historically constituted, stable community of people, formed on the basis of a common language, territory, economic life, and psychological make-up manifested in a common culture. ... It must be emphasized that none of the above characteristics taken separately is sufficient to define a nation. More than that, it is sufficient for a single one of these characteristics to be lacking and the nation ceases to be a nation."

Despite their distaste for Stalin, the Spartacist League claims to uphold *Marxism and the National Question*, saying it "is still considered justifiably a theoretical contribution of the Marxist movement" and that when it was written, Stalin's view "was close to Lenin's."(4) In MIM Theory 7, "Proletarian Feminist Revolutionary Nationalism on the Communist Road," MIM argues that the Black nation meets the criteria described above, while acknowledging that the Black nation has

multiple territories (e.g., the Southern Black Belt, Harlem, South Central Los Angeles, Oakland), not a single one.(5) The Spartacist League has argued that the Black nation does not meet Stalin's criteria for nationhood.(6) But their argument does not address the analysis advanced by MIM in MIM Theory 7. For example, the Sparts' essay dismisses the existence of Black territory by saying, "The geographical distribution of Blacks is increasingly the same as that of the U.S. working class as a whole."(6)

As an aside, the Sparts' essay notes that some "American Indians" (First Nations) "would qualify for a national status in the Marxist sense." We would like to hear more from the Sparts on this question. Instead of cheerleading for Quebec's right to self-determination (on the backs of the Mohawk nation and other First Nations), the Sparts need to speak out for the defense and liberation of the First Nations in North America. The Sparts' general silence about the existence of nations other than Quebec within the empires' false borders serves to promote the myth that these empires are legitimate nations.(7)

The Sparts are simply wrong to assert that "black people constitute an oppressed minority whose main impetus for struggle since the time of slavery has been to fight toward full integration — not some 'colonial liberation.'"(1) If this were true, the Sparts would not feel the need to opportunistically associate themselves with living Black nationalists like Mumia Abu-Jamal and Geronimo Pratt, or with images of Malcolm X and the Black Panther Party. The Spartacist League likes to criticize Martin Luther King, Jr. from the standpoint of Malcolm X. What they don't acknowledge is that King's capitulationist strategy of nonviolence, which they reject, went hand-in-hand with the capitulationist strategy of integrationism that they uphold. The Spart essay that articulates their "revolutionary integrationist" position is a dogmatic expression of white-chauvinist wishful thinking.(8) Enemies of the oppressed like William Masters, Bernie Goetz, David Duke, and Proposition 187 supporters are not to be "integrated" with — they are to be overthrown!

Lastly, the Sparts write, "Black people helped build the wealth of American society first as slaves and today as a strategic layer of the working class."(1) Besides the integrationist notion of "the" (U.S.) working class which we criticized above, this is correct. What the Sparts don't mention here is that Blacks on the whole, let alone the workers and peasants of the neocolonies who contribute enormously to Amerikkka's wealth, do not share in this wealth, while whites on the whole do. This is why we said that Affirmative Action is progressive, but severely limited. The white Amerikan nation owes massive reparations to the people of North America's internal colonies and external neocolonies. Affirmative Action is a token step in this correct direction. Which brings us to one last question. Why do the Sparts "defend affirmative action," when they believe that "preferential hiring 'Affirmative Action' programs set workers against each other"?(9)

Notes:

1. "Defend Affirmative Action—Fight for Open Admissions! UCLA Students Sit In," Workers Vanguard, Mar. 1, 1996, p. 12. The full article is available from MIM or from the Spartacist League, which can be reached at P.O. Box 1377 GPO, New York, NY 10116.
2. MIM Theory #1 is available from MIM for $3.
3. For more on Trotskyism versus Marxism-Leninism in the tradition of Stalin and Mao, get MIM Theory #6, "The Stalin Issue," from MIM for $5.
4. Marxist Bulletin 5 Revised, pp. 28, 29. $1.50 from the Spartacist League.
5. MIM Theory #7 is available from MIM for $5.
6. Marxist Bulletin 5 Revised, p. 30.
7. Ibid., p. 31.
8. Ibid., pp. 1-16.
9. Ibid., p. 12.

Review

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The fact that, since the Second World War, the history of the Marxist movement has been written almost exclusively by the many Trotskyist sects, creates many problems for struggling Marxist-Leninists. This, coupled with revisionist betrayal, ensures that redefining history must inevitably become a part of any Marxist-Leninist agitation/propaganda.

I have disagreement with one article entitled, "May Day, 1975: Liberation of Vietnam," or more specifically its line on China's role in the conflict. While it is true that China's foreign policy in such areas as Chile and Sri Lanka was obviously reactionary, this was due to the firm entrenchment of pro-Western revisionists of Zhou Enlai's camp. It was among these revisionists that the coup d'etat in 1976 was organized, thus ending the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution and indeed communist rule in that country. Furthermore, in spite of what the Vietnam article insinuates, the Cultural Revolution was orchestrated, not to consolidate Mao Zedong's power, but to safeguard and advance the cause of socialist construction in China.

The Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution demonstrated to the world that revolutions did not have to end in defeat. In one decade, the Chinese revolutionaries shattered centuries of tradition and generally accepted "wisdom" and broke chains that had oppressed the masses for many hundreds of years. As Mao so accurately observed in 1967: "In the past we waged struggles in rural areas, in factories in the cultural field and we carried out the socialist education movement. But all of this failed to solve the problem because we did not find a form, a method, to arouse the

broad masses to expose our dark aspect openly, in an all-round way and from below."

This analysis was made at a time when such opinions were considered heresy by the so-called communist movement. The Chinese Communist Party's leading role in the socialist revolution ensured that many of its members held important posts in the government. Mao, however, saw the danger that these comrades who had remained undaunted by the guns of their enemies may still fall from what Mao called "sugar-coated bullets." These bullets, were, effectively, temptations to hold onto and protect many of the old ways that remain in the new society.

Also in 1967, after fierce struggle, millions of rebel workers, students and peasants in the city of Shanghai succeeded in overthrowing the municipal party committee. This actually took the form of physically storming the municipal services, in what is now known as the January Storm. Jack Chen, in his book *Inside the Cultural Revolution*," was able to give this account:

"Plant after plant, office after office was taken over by its workers. Detachments of the P.L.A. (People's Liberation Army), at the request of the W.G.H.G. (Shanghai Workers Revolutionary Rebel General Headquarters), took up posts along with the workers militia to guard key points, power stations, water works, transport centers, telephone and radio stations – in order to prevent sabotage. The workers had studied Marx's work on the Paris Commune. Noting his criticism that the Communards had not seized the banks, they posted pickets at all banks to prevent a run on their funds. It was a classical revolutionary take-over of power."

When the "capitalist-roaders" seized power from the revolutionaries in the aftermath of Mao's death, they joined the chorus of the bourgeoisie in condemning the Cultural Revolution as a monumental catastrophe. Leaving aside Black propaganda, genuine bourgeois calculations tell a different story. Time magazine, a fine example of a bourgeois mouthpiece, in its first issue following the death of Mao (September 20, 1976), stated that China had made some staggering accomplishments: "Industrial production increased from $11.2 billion to $185 billion last year (1975); the problem of adequately feeding the country's enormous population was solved."

The so-called "nationalist opportunism" attributed to China and the Soviet Union was effectively the struggle between revolutionary China and the revisionist USSR It is only natural that the former should want to wrest the international communist movement from the enemies of socialism. Nixon's much publicized visit to China in 1972, rather than symbolizing some kind of détente, was a political victory for the People's Republic. The president of the U.S. government, by traveling to China, recognized the socialist republic over the reactionary Taiwanese state and was forced to treat it as an equal. Whatever the revisionist Zhou Enlai is alleged to have said to General Alexander Haig prior to the Nixon visit is unlikely to surprise when one analyzes his role during the Cultural Revolution.

What concerns me most, however, is the fact that the article does not draw any distinction between China before and after the 1976 coup, a highly relevant issue to all who oppose the current crypto-fascist Chinese regime. The Khmer Rouge, prior to defeating the Lon Nol regime waged a legitimate national liberation struggle. It was the Dengist revisionists who were responsible for the continued support for the Pol Potist regime and the 1979 incursion into Vietnam. At no point in the article is this shift in power referred to, despite its fundamental importance both nationally and internationally. To keep the record straight, however, I would point out that China's attack on Vietnam came as a response to Vietnam's invasion of Kampuchea and not, as the article suggests, because of the U.S. defeat which

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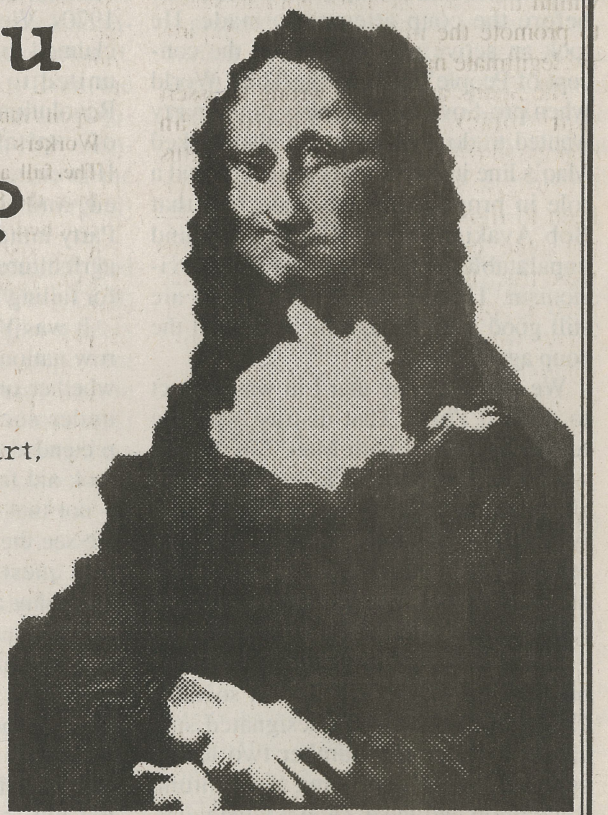

occurred a full four years earlier.

One last point I would like to make concerns the alleged murder of Lin Biao. This sort of inflammatory language leads me to suspect an anti-Maoist bent in the author. The reality of the situation is that the traitor Lin Biao's plane crashed in "suspicious circumstances." Hardly conclusive evidence. This is the kind of historical interpretation that made the allegation that Stalin assassinated Trotsky a generally accepted reality.

MC5 replies: We basically agree with the comrade writing from Dublin. As s/he points out, Zhou Enlai was in charge of foreign policy as head of state at the time of the incidents that are being referred to in Chile and elsewhere.

Zhou Enlai died just before Mao, but Zhou was the one to groom Deng Xiaoping for power. This demonstrates the importance of uniting behind the struggle for cultural revolution under socialist construction. The revolutionary forces were too weak to be able to forestall Deng.

Lin Biao had many positive aspects before the coup attempt he made. He took an active role in backing the concept of People's War in the Third World when pro-Soviet revisionists in the party wanted to do without it. He also backed Mao's line in the military and even had a role in propagating the mass line that Bob Avakian of the RCP-USA found unpalatable to his back-to-Lenin revisionism. These good things Lin did are still good even though he attempted the coup against Mao.

We can even say that Lin was correct to distrust Zhou. That distrust was one reason he argued with Mao. Lin did not want Zhou or his like as head-of-state. However, secret military coups are hardly a means of mass mobilization and reflect Lin's elitist view, which was attacked in the campaign to "Criticize Lin Biao and Confucius."

If Lin Biao had managed to contain himself, we might still have a socialist China, but instead this designated successor to Mao and number two leader split the forces upholding the Cultural Revolution and gave Zhou a huge windfall. It was a blow from which the revolutionary forces, including the masses betrayed by Lin, never recovered before Deng took power.

With regard to the alleged assassination of Lin Biao by Mao, this is to turn history on its head. In their desperate bid to smear Mao, the bourgeois critics are trying to have this both ways.

If everyone in the Chinese party had taken the Vietnamese revisionist view of class struggle under socialism, the Chinese never would have supported People's War in the 1960s and the many good things they did would not have happened. Zhou Enlai and his like would have seized power earlier and more thoroughly by more or less following the bad Soviet example of the late 1950s and early 1960s.

In Korea, the revisionists who deny the need for class struggle against the new bourgeoisie arising in the top ranks of the party at least have a half-way plausible excuse: Korea is not unified, and may not have finished the new democratic stage. Likewise, in the early 1970s, Vietnamese comrades could have claimed to be too busy uniting all to be united to take sides on the Cultural Revolution in China and the restoration of capitalism in the Soviet Union. However, once the revolution completed, and the Vietnamese Communist Party imitated the Deng Xiaoping line in agriculture and industry, those excuses for failing to side with Mao rang hollow.

It was Vietnam and Korea taking narrow nationalist stands on the question of whether or not a new bourgeoisie arose under socialism. Vietnam and Korea pretended to be above this question and took aid from both the USSR and China – not that we object to taking aid. Now we see the result of trying to get around this question that Mao raised against Yugoslav and Soviet revisionism. There is no question that in the ex-Soviet Union and Albania, open pro-Western capitalism was not restored by imperialist invasion or old landlord classes, but by people right in the top ranks of the party. Gorbachev and Yeltsin were nothing but top-ranking capitalist roaders completing the work of top-ranking capitalist-roaders like Khruschev. There is absolutely nothing in the Korean or Vietnamese revisionist lines to account for these basic facts.

Whatever mistakes China might or might not have made in foreign policy pale in comparison to failing to speak out clearly on one side or the other regarding China's analysis of Soviet revisionism. Mistakes can be corrected if there is proletarian control of state power. Everything goes out the window though in a situation like the ex-Soviet Union or Albania and it is unfortunate that even the Korean and Vietnamese communist parties are still too dishonest to admit that. How can alleged foreign policy mistakes compare with letting whole modes of production change in the hands of Khruschev, Brezhnev, Gorbachev, Yeltsin and Alia (Albania)?

The out-and-out right opportunism of the Korean and Vietnamese revisionists regarding the Cultural Revolution at the time consolidated into the revisionism that rules in those countries today. These revisionists bear a heavy responsibility for failing the international communist movement in ideological matters.

The Communist Action writers make it sound like people engaged in armed struggle had no time for discussing socialist construction. Yet, in the Philippines we have a case where Jose Maria Sison founded a communist party and led the New People's Army and still had time and found it absolutely necessary to write an absolutely clear book on the agrarian revolution in the Philippines that linked it to Mao's Cultural Revolution (*Philippine Society and Revolution*, 1970). Hence, narrow nationalism and right opportunism were not inevitable products of being involved in the armed struggle. The People's War in the Philippines is a case in point for the generation since 1970.

One last point is that the blame is not only from the right opportunist side. Lin Biao's coup also gave rise to ultraleft tendencies and cynicism in some of the Chinese masses who distrusted all leaders. In the imperialist countries, the

maneuvers connected to the Three Worlds Theory also gave rise to a line of thinking that justified splitting the international communist movement as if China could afford to go on the revolutionary offensive against every reactionary regime in the world at once. These ultraleftists abandoned Mao just because he shook Nixon's hand, just as they had abandoned Stalin when he shook Hitler's. Such divisive people will form new parties every time a new photograph appears in the bourgeois press.

Wang Li Interviewed

On April 9, the New York Times interviewed Wang Li, a leading ultraleftist of the Cultural Revolution in China. Wang Li has been in disgrace in China since 1967 for being leftist in appearance but rightist in essence. Since 1967, this is the first interview with this important figure of the Cultural Revolution that MIM knows of.

Now he is 75 years old and petitioning for re-entrance into the Communist Party of China. According to Wang Li, Deng Xiaoping and Liu Shaoqi's widow have nothing but good words for him now.(1)

MIM did not agree with Wang Li at the time of the Cultural Revolution from what we know. People who read from MIM's literature list will find a description of Wang Li's last days in power in *The Wind Will Not Subside* by David Milton and Nancy Milton.(2)

Wang Li advocated widening the net to catch more enemies of the Cultural Revolution. He was the force behind the May 16th Red Guard organization, which may have correctly targeted Zhou Enlai but incorrectly attacked many others as well. The ultraleft Red Guard organizations believed that 90-95% of the Chinese Communist Party was already a state-capitalist class, which is preposterous because it amounts to saying tens of millions of workers and peasants in the Communist Party were capitalists. Such a broad approach to enemies is really just lifestyle politics – though in China it was more militant than lifestyle politics anywhere else in the world.

MIM could believe that 90-95% of a supposed communist party based in the labor aristocracies of the imperialist societies could easily go revisionist. We have seen that too often not to believe it. The most incredible example in Amerikan history occurred when the leader of the Communist Party USA simply abolished the CPUSA in the aftermath of World War II. The rank-and-file did little to resist Earl Browder when he did that. Later the CPUSA re-established itself with pressure from Stalin, but after Stalin died, it fell for anti-Stalin revisionism. In China, however, there was no material basis for 90-95% revisionism in the Communist Party.

Sydney Rittenberg followed Wang Li. Rittenberg was an American in charge of Peking Radio. Likewise, the Progressive Labor Party was loyal to this faction of the Red Guard movement and abandoned Mao when he turned against it. Today we don't hear much from the Progressive Labor Party about its original break with Mao and most PLP members don't know about it because of the influence of pragmatism in that organization.

It was the inability of the ultraleft Red Guards, led by the likes of Wang Li, to focus their fire on the capitalist-roaders that led to the second most important split in the proletarian camp in the Cultural Revolution. The worst split occurred when Lin Biao attempted a military coup and thereby made steady-handed bureaucrat right opportunists look good in comparison. The Zhou Enlais of the world did many good things and only represented the slow but steady slide into capitalism. Lin Biao brought about a much quicker split in the proletarian headquarters and caused general confusion and cynicism in the proletarian camp which was much more lethal more quickly than Zhou Enlai's slow and steady approach.

MIM would like to see the Progressive Labor Party sum up what has happened with regard to the various lines put forward in the Cultural Revolution. According to the New York Times, Wang Li followed Mao but he believed Mao was making mistakes.

We also need an investigation into the connections between the ultraleft and the right. It would not surprise MIM if Deng Xiaoping and Liu Shaoqi's widow really did work with Wang Li all along. The top-ranking party members who really did have access to the means of production and could control them for a capitalist agenda had an interest in promoting Wang Li's line to discredit the Cultural Revolution and to divert the fire from themselves. If Red Guards spent their time attacking 90-95% of the party, then Deng Xiaoping and Liu Shaoqi had nothing to worry about. They could use the whole party as their shield, thanks to the ultraleft.

Although MIM does not agree with Wang Li's line, we would like to see him released from his disgrace in China – preferably into exile. He is now an historical figure who holds a piece of the truth of what happened in the Cultural Revolution. We would like him to write and speak his views and history without the pressure of the Chinese government or the CIA upon him.

Notes:

1. New York Times, Apr. 10, 1996, p. 3.
2. David Milton and Nancy Milton, *The Wind Will Not Subside*. New York: Pantheon Books, 1976. pp. 280-7.

Poem

Everybody Wants to Go to Heaven, But Nobody Wants to Die

"What is meant by the emergence of a new process? The old unity with its constituent opposites yields to a new unity with its constituent opposites, whereupon a new process emerges to replace the old.

"The old process ends and the new

one begins. The new process contains new contradictions and begins its own history of the development of contradictions. ...

"... the old aspect changes from being major to being minor and gradually dies out. ... The unity of opposites is conditional, temporary and relative, while the struggle of mutually exclusive opposites is absolute. ...

"... Even if the U.S. atom bombs were so powerful that, when dropped on China, they would make a hole right through the earth, or even blow it up, that would hardly mean anything to the universe as a whole, though it might be a major event for the solar system.

"The life of dialectics is the continuous movement toward opposites. Mankind will also finally meet its doom. When the theologians talk about doomsday, they are pessimistic and terrify people. ...

"I don't believe that communism will not be divided into stages, and that there will be no qualitative changes. Lenin said that all things can be divided. He gave the atoms as an example ...

"The myriad things develop continuously and limitlessly, and they are infinite. Time and space are infinite. As regards space, looking at it macroscopically and microscopically, it is infinite, it can be divided endlessly. So even after a million years scientists will still have work to do. ... We should always be bringing forth new things. Otherwise what are we here for? What do we want descendants for? New things are to be found in reality, we must grasp reality. ...

"When people die there should be parties to celebrate the victory of dialectics, to celebrate the destruction of the old. ...

"One thing destroys another, things emerge, develop, and are destroyed, everywhere is like this. If things are not destroyed by others, then they destroy themselves. Forests live longer than human beings, yet even they last only a few thousand years. If there were no such thing as death, that would be unbearable."

—*Mao Zedong*

UNBEARABLE PERFECTION

One night in Northern Luzon,
A peasant pauses in a forest clearing.
She looks up at the night sky,
Filled with stars.

"The universe," she thinks,
"Like this war,
Had a beginning,
And will have an ending."

Cradling her Armalite,
Like an infant resting at the breast,
She asks herself,
"Why do I fight?"

"Is it for myself,
Even though I shall one day die?
Is it for the people,
If one day the species shall perish?"

"Why do I have faith in the Party,
In the triumph of the revolution,
In the dawn of communism,
When the only inevitability is death?"

A meteor streaks across the sky,
And burns up soundlessly.
The leaves rustle.
Her hands sweat.

"I have no choice," she whispers
To herself. "This is the new thing,
Eating up the old thing. I am a part.
A finger on the trigger of freedom."

She sighs, rises, and goes
Through the clearing,
Under the sky,
Into the jungle.

Under her social discipline,
With each slow breath,
Step by step,
Heaven unfolds.

• • •

Simple cell structures
Live for hundreds of millions
Of years. These

Relatively immortal cells duplicate
Themselves through an endless division
Of one into two.

Simple cell birth is the process
Of constant splitting
Into identical units.

The price of biological diversity,
Carved out through time by complex
Cells that learned to multiply

Is: mortality.

• • •

Without life,
There is no death.
Without death,
There is no life.

The method of our survival
Is social combination,
Melding the mortal divisions
Into imperfect wholes.

Partly this is the product
Of consciousness. Mostly
This is the product
Of forces beyond our control.

Grasping reality means
Hanging onto those fragments
That we can hold
And change.

The universe expands and collapses.
Stars harden into planets
Moving in patterns determined by
The product of their mass

And the inverse of the square
Of the distance between
Objects that are moving
Even when they seem at rest.

Only motion is forever
And has no opposite.
Motion knows no heaven
Nor hell.

Events beyond our imagination
Unfold in magnitudes
Too small and too big
For our senses.

Life found consciousness
Because diversity demanded
Ganglia and the cooperation of
Mutually dependent organs.

Our social organism
Developed under conditions
That brought forth abundance,
Exploitation and murder.

Always teetering on the edge
Of oblivion, we consign
Our main parts to the deepest hells,
While some sun in the finest heavens.

Through multiplication and diversity
We found pain and suffering.
Through misery and uneven development
We learn to recognize imperfection.

But it does not matter to the Sun
Whether or not we starve or eat,
Love or hate, transform society,
Invade the stars,

Or perish in a scattering
Of neutrinos. If the earth
Is knocked off course
By our bombs,

It will change
Eight other orbits.
This will be – whether or not
Astronomers are there to plot new charts.

The Milky Way Galaxy
Will not miss a beat
When the Sun
Goes super-nova.

Carbon atoms do not prefer
To compose one thing
Over another thing. They attract and repel within the freedom of their necessities.

The infinite universe
Is beyond our comprehension.
Does that surprise anyone?
How can collections

Of carbon atoms hope
To marry God (perfection)?
The ability to categorize
And extrapolate

Serves us in the production
And the distribution
And the general re-arrangement
Of collections of particles

That will exist as they are,
Inside their own particular motions,
Be they temporarily coalesced
As steel foundries

Or butterflies.
The yearning for immortality
and perfection are
But a temporary stage
In our dying.

So concerned have we been
With theft
That we have forgotten
Being (imperfection).

It is necessary for us
To cross the clearing,
Breath, pause to acknowledge
The night sky.

It is necessary for us
To pull the triggers
On the crude machines
We created for our own destruction.

Our motion is class struggle.
We have no choice.
Perfection
Does not exist.

Because imperfection
Is perfection's opposite,
And the imperfect is but a striving
Within the inevitability of non-existence.

Nothing is perfect.
Because only imperfection exists,
We do what we must to change imperfect conditions,
Even as imperfect conditions change us.

The universe that we know
Is imperfect and imbalanced.
Imbalance is motion itself.
Only motion exists.

Where there is no imperfection
There is no motion.
Where there is no motion:
There is nothing: no "where."

It is our very nature,
A condition of our existence here,
To struggle. When struggle ends,
So do we.

We define ourselves,
With such grandiosity,
As capable of making
Even the infinite rational.

What we cannot perceive: we cannot know.
Most of the universe
Is – and will remain –
Imperceptible to us.

As matter in motion
We have some small control
Over the length of the time
We flutter.

Will time end, too,
When the human species is extinct?
What about velocity?
No. Matter bound by

Gravity and electromagnetism
Will perform its pirouettes
And hellish transformations
Over the distances of heaven

Regardless of *homo sapiens*.
Heaven and hell are our fearful
Unity of opposites.
They are simple

Expressions of class struggle.
Despair at being insignificant
Is a bourgeois luxury.
Acceptance of our trajectory

Across the firmament
Demands the realism
Of the proletariat.
What is coming into being

Dashes all traditions.
The overwhelming opposite
Against which we struggle
Is non-being.

In this age,
The monster of imperfection
Is capitalism – which is slaying
Everyone before our time.

Our ancestors struggled,
For four million years,
To bring forth the material
That frees our being from certain needs.

Once our labor is no longer
Alienable, we shall
Be free to unravel
New contradictions. In time

The original carbon atoms
That coalesced imperfectly as the
Self-reproducing amoebae
That spawned us all:

Shall preside in temporary combinations
Over the universal disintegration

Of all matter, as immortality
Reasserts itself.

One divides into two
Forever. After voluntary and
Conscious communism
Divides into two and

Pain and suffering have given place
To new problems
We may learn that
The important questions

We solved in desperate battle
Turn on us a million-fold
As ten thousand years of communism
Produces a new species

Who view our most precious history
As the inarticulate
Barking of dogs
Fighting over bones.

Will what we know as science be the vehicle
They ride? Will they be
Conscious of where we traveled
As we practiced living?

Heraclitus, the Greek philosopher,
admired by Karl Marx,
Ignited modern science
When he proclaimed:

"It is."
Dialectical materialists,
Can change the form of matter,
But not matter's essence.

This knowledge –
That only nothing lasts –
Contains the certainty
Of perfection.

If joy is the absence
Of sadness,
And victory the opposite
Of defeat,

And perfection the absence
Of imperfection,
Than perfection is unobtainable.
Shed no tears,

The descendants of our DNA
May gladly merge
Back into nothingness
To meet the perfection

We so boldly promised.

• • •

We fight now
For survival
Because we have conceived.
The world is pregnant with us.

— Leslie Hope

MIM Theory

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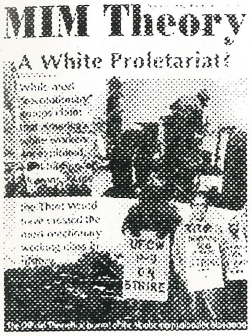

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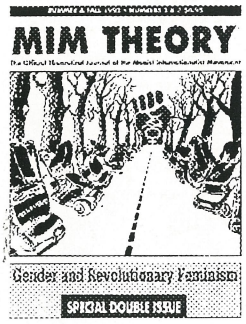

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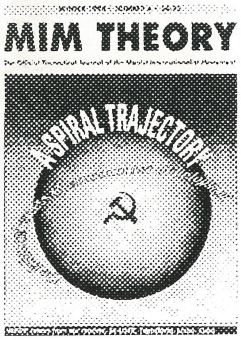

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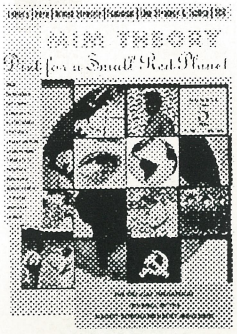

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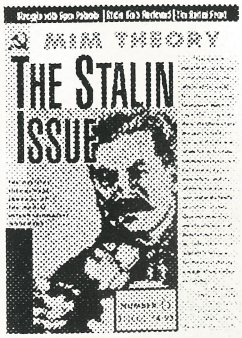

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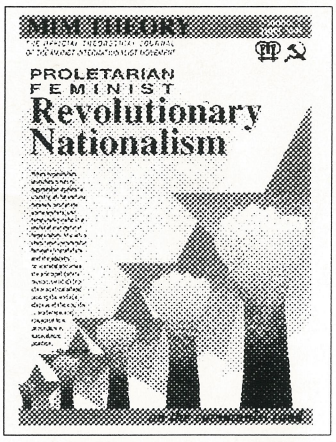

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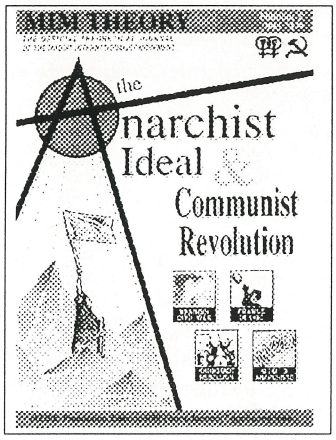

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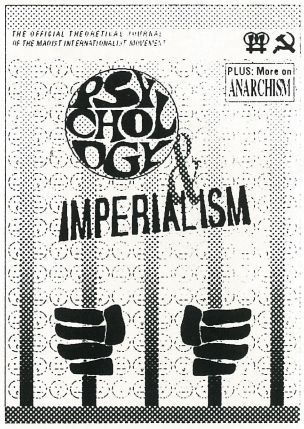

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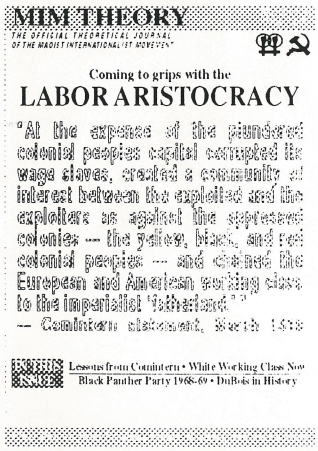

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